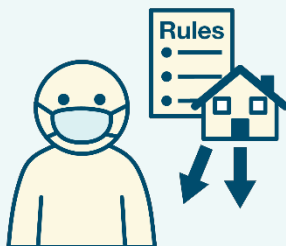# Coronavirus: Wearing a mask

At the moment in some parts of Australia the number of coronavirus (COVID-19) cases are high.

These places might be known as a 'hot spot'.

Or they might be under Stage 3 restrictions.

This means that there are rules about when you can leave your home.

In some states and territories, the government says that you must wear a mask when you leave your home.

Who should wear a mask?

If the government in your state or territory says that you must wear a mask, you must do so.

You might get a fine if you go outside without a mask.
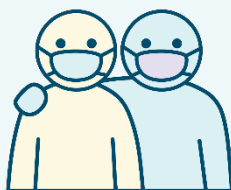
You might also choose to wear a face mask when you go outside if you:

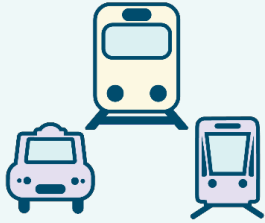- are not able to stay 1.5 metres away from other people

- have a chronic illness or health condition

- have a support worker in your home – you can both wear a mask to protect each other

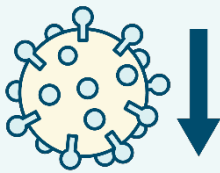- need to visit a busy area like a shopping centre or market

- use public transport

- want to feel safer when you go out.

Who doesn't need to wear a mask?

You don't need to wear a mask if:

- the government in your state or territory says you don't have to

- the number of COVID-19 cases in your area are low.

Some other people don't need to wear a mask, including:

- children under 12 years old

- people who have a disability, physical, mental health or medical condition that makes it hard to wear a mask.

Please talk to your doctor or healthcare provider if you can't wear a mask.

What type of mask should you wear?

There are different kinds of masks.

Surgical masks can only be used once.

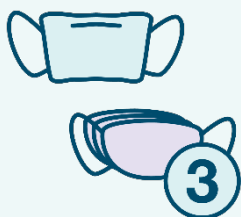After you have worn a surgical mask, you need to throw it away.

Cloth masks can be used again after they have been washed.

A cloth mask needs to have 3 layers.

Some people use a headscarf or a face covering.

This might not be as good as a:

- surgical mask

- cloth mask with 3 layers.

How to wear a mask safely

There are ways to wear a mask safely.

1. Wash your hands before you put the mask on.

2. Only touch the ear loops or the strings on the sides of the mask as you put it on.

3. Make sure the mask covers your nose and mouth.

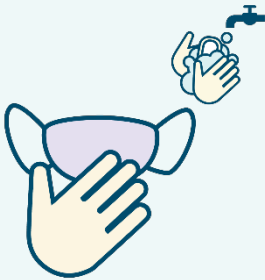4. Make sure the mask fits tightly around:

   - your chin

   - the bridge of your nose

   - the sides of your face.

5. Don't touch the mask while you wear it.

6. If you accidentally touch the mask, wash your hands.

You must wash your hands any time you touch a mask.

Taking the mask off

Carry a paper or plastic bag with you to put the mask in after you have used it.

Wash your hands before you touch the mask.

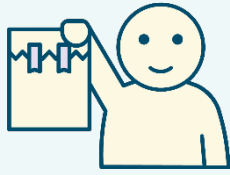Don't touch the front of the mask as you take it off.

Use the ear loops or strings to take it off.

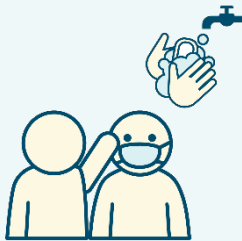Put a surgical mask in the bin straight away.

Wash a cloth mask straight away.

If you can't put it in the bin or wash it straight away, put the mask in a bag. Seal the bag up.

Wash your hands after you take the mask off.

If you need help to remove the mask, make sure that person washes their hands as well.
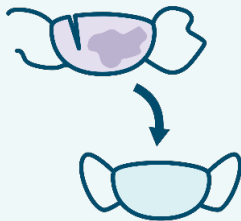
What to avoid

Avoid touching the mask while you wear it.

If you want to eat or drink or talk to someone, you need to take your mask off and wash your hands first. It is not safe to pull a mask down.

Don't wear a wet or damaged mask.

If your mask gets wet or damaged, replace it with a new one.

Don't re-use a mask.

Each time you need to wear a mask, choose one of these options:

- a clean cloth mask

- a new surgical mask.
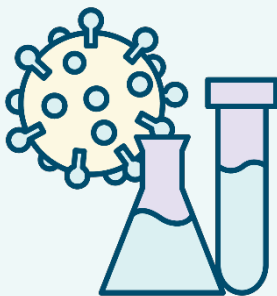
Will a mask keep you safe from coronavirus?

Even if you wear a mask, you still need to:

- stay at home if you don't feel well –
  even if you only feel a little bit sick

1.5m

- stay 1.5 metres away from other people

- get tested if you have a fever, cough,
  sore throat or shortness of breath

- wash your hands often

- cough or sneeze into your bent elbow or a tissue.

Throw away any tissues you use.

Wash your hands after you cough or sneeze.

More information

For information, contact the Disability Information Helpline on **1800 643 787** or visit
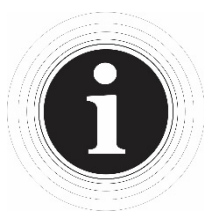
www.dss.gov.au/disabilityhelp

You can call the National Coronavirus Helpline on **1800 020 080**. It's open 24 hours a day.

If you need information in a language other than English, call **131 450**.

If you're worried about your health, call your doctor. Do not go to the doctor – call first.

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