



Standards on the Use of Medical Masks or Cloth Masks or Visors in the Community for decreasing COVID-19 Transmission

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The following standards are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta as provided by SL.456.71 Second Repealing Regulations, 2022 and require strict adherence. Failure to adhere to these standards will result in enforcement procedures, as provided by the Act and the subsidiary legislation.

COVID-19 has been leaving a mark on the world, with a great toll on health, economies, and society in general. Consistent and proportionate use of a variety of public health measures have helped to control the pandemic. The drive for vaccination with booster doses along with the non-pharmaceutical measures were crucial to control and retain a stable situation and decrease the burden on acute hospitalisations, ICU admissions and COVID-related deaths.

ECDC have ascertained that Medical face masks are among the most efficient means to prevent the transmission of SARS-COV-2 including existing variants and that the wearing of masks should be considered in crowded indoor and outdoor settings.

Standards for wearing a medical mask or cloth mask or a visor

The standards for wearing a medical mask or cloth mask or a visor are applicable for the following environments, namely:

1. In hospitals
2. In medical clinics
3. In old people's homes and in care homes for persons with disability

The following individuals shall be exempt from the requirement to wear a face mask:

- (a) Children up to three (3) years of age.
- (b) Severe medical conditions for which one requires to obtain a medical certificate as an exemption to wearing a mask in places where this is obligatory, include the following -
 - i) Cognitive impairment: Neurodevelopmental disabilities; intellectual disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder, as certified by a Statementing certificate in children under the age of 16, or by a medical certificate in adults aged 16 and older.
 - ii) Mental health disorders including conditions listed above, and such as Severe Anxiety Disorder with intolerance to mask and any other exceptional psychiatric condition as certified by a psychiatrist.
 - iii) Respiratory impairment: Obstructive upper airway conditions such as choanal atresia, nasopharyngeal mass, chronic respiratory failure, and persons prescribed continuous home oxygen as certified by a medical certificate.



The temporary removal of facemasks shall be permissible in the following situations:

- (a) to take medication.
- (b) to receive any medical or cosmetic treatment or service involving the face or mouth.
- (c) when speaking or providing assistance to any individual who relies on lip reading to communicate.
- (d) when necessary, during the consumption of food or drink.
- (e) if required for identification purposes.

As a result of ongoing evidence, public health authorities also strongly recommend that a medical mask is worn whenever / wherever persons feel unsafe in the company of persons who do not form part of their household and/or in overcrowded environments, although this is not a mandatory requirement. People at high risk for severe COVID-19 are advised to wear an FFP2 respirator mask.

The use of face masks helps limiting the spread of infection from infected individuals who may not know they are infected, who have not yet developed symptoms or who remain asymptomatic. The wearing of masks will therefore enhance the effects of physical distancing. **Face masks are not a replacement for keeping physical distancing; for observing cough and sneeze etiquette; for maintaining meticulous hand hygiene and for avoiding touching one's face.**

Masks should NOT be used during strenuous work and when practicing vigorous exercise. Masks are to be worn if a sport does not involve vigorous exercise or is practiced in the vicinity of other people.

Regardless of how well they work, the success of masks at protecting others depends on the type of mask worn and whether people in the community wear masks correctly and properly covering nose, mouth, and chin, keep them in place, and make sure the mask does not get too wet.