



# Standards on the Use of Face Masks or Visors/Face Shields in the Community for decreasing COVID-19 Transmission

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This document lays out standards for the general public on the use of face masks in communities where local transmission of COVID-19 is reported.

## Mandatory use of medical or cloth face masks and visors/face shields

IN EXERCISE of the powers conferred by articles 26 and 27(c) of the Public Health Act, the Minister responsible for public health, after consultation with the Superintendent of Public Health has issued the Mandatory Use of Medical or Cloth Masks Regulations which stipulate the following: -

**Any person shall, outside his residence, both when going to an indoor place and outdoors, wear a medical or cloth mask in a proper manner covering the nose, mouth and chin of the person.**

The mandatory use of medical or cloth masks or visors shall not apply to private homes or private vehicles.

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<sup>1</sup>** 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;

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<sup>1</sup> A Statementing Certificate refers to the document produced as a result of the Statementing Process-when a student requires adaptations and supports outside what can be provided by the school itself, the development of an individualised education programme. This is preceded by a referral for extended external assessment, known as the Statementing Process



- 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) in the case of children attending kindergarten, while in the classroom.
- (b) during high intensity physical activity.
- (c) when speaking or providing assistance to any individual who relies on lip reading to communicate.
- (d) during official public speaking provided that a physical distance of at least two (2) meters between individuals is maintained:
  - provided that the delivery of lessons or lectures in schools, universities or other education establishments shall not be construed as official public speaking.
- (e) if requested to for identification purposes, including at banks, at the airport or seaport or by law enforcement officials.
- (f) to receive any medical or cosmetic treatment or service involving the face or mouth.
- (g) to take medication.
- (h) when seated at establishments where food and drink is served.
- (i) when necessary during the consumption of food or drink.
- (j) when smoking lit tobacco products:
  - provided that in the cases mentioned in paragraphs (i) and (j), the temporary removal of face masks shall not be permissible while a person is walking.

In Educational settings, in line with the 'Guidelines for the Education Sector up to Secondary Schools' and the 'Guidelines to the educational sector for Post-Secondary Schools/Institutions and Tertiary Institutions in Malta and Gozo', **only masks** can be used and visors can only be used together with a face mask. However, in certain situations where an individual is exempt from mask-wearing as outlined above in these Standards, then a face shield is preferable to nothing at all.

Any person who fails to abide by the provisions of these regulations shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to the payment of a penalty of hundred euros (€100) for each and every instance in which these regulations are breached:

Provided that if the offence is admitted and the penalty is paid before proceedings are commenced before the Commissioner for Justice, the penalty applicable shall be reduced to fifty euro (€50).



## Public Health advice regarding masks

Where tolerated, in addition to the above legal requirements and as a result of ongoing evidence of the effectiveness of masks in decreasing the spread of COVID-19, public health authorities also strongly recommend that a medical or cloth mask is worn in private homes or in private vehicles when you are in the company of persons who do not form part of your household, although this is not a mandatory requirement. The use of face masks helps reduce the spread of infection in the community by 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. **It is important to note that face masks are not a replacement for keeping physical distancing; observing cough and sneeze etiquette; maintaining meticulous hand hygiene and 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 cloth or surgical masks at protecting others depends on whether people in the community wear them properly, keep them in place, and make sure the mask doesn't get too wet. **Non-medical face masks prevent viral particles from potentially being spread by the mask wearer. They do not protect the mask wearer from being infected if someone who is positive for COVID-19 transmits respiratory droplets onto the person wearing the mask.**



## References:

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