



Instructions on the use of face masks

According to the Ministry of Health's [regulations](#), meetings, workplaces and other operations shall ensure that it is possible to have at least 2 metres between individuals who are not connected. In situations where it is not possible to ensure a distance of 2 metres between individuals, a face mask must be used that covers the nose and mouth. In addition, face masks shall be used in public transport, in shops and other services.

- **The use of a face mask reduces the likelihood of droplets from the respiratory tract (which may contain the COVID-19 virus) being released into the air, and a mask may also reduce the likelihood of inhaling such droplets from others. Thus, face masks reduce the risk of infection.**
- **Face masks never replace general infection prevention measures, i.e. maintaining distance, washing or sanitizing hands after contact with common surfaces, being careful when coughing and sneezing and cleaning contact surfaces regularly.**

Exemptions from the use of facemasks:

- Children born in 2005 and later
- Individuals with prior COVID-19 infection who have recovered.
- Those that cannot for medical reason or due to disability wear a face mask.

Face masks that cover the mouth and nose should always be worn in – *also applies to those vaccinated against COVID-19*

- Shops and other services.
- In theatre, concerts, cinema, museums, sport events, church and similar events and gatherings.
- Coaches, public transport (bus) and taxis. During driving and flying lessons.
- Hair and beauty salons and similar establishments.
- Airports, on planes for both domestic and international flights and on passenger ferries.

Face masks should be used when the distance rules cannot be followed:

- For healthcare services
- For law enforcement
- In schools in certain situations according to regulations. For further information, please see [questions and answers](#) on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The most stringent hygiene measures must be taken when using face masks

- The purpose of face masks is to capture respiratory droplets from the person wearing the mask to ensure that such droplets are less likely to be dispersed into the environment.
- Used face masks are extremely contaminated with microbes that are commonly found in saliva and also by what could come from the respiratory tract (e.g. cold viruses, SARS CoV-2 or other).
- Therefore, the most stringent hygiene measures must be used. Face masks should be touched as little as possible and must be changed if damp or damaged in any manner.
- It is best to touch only the straps and the outer edge of the face mask when removing it and place it directly in general waste.
- Hands must always be washed or sanitised after touching used face masks.

Disposable face masks

- It is best to use disposable face masks, which are discarded after use into general waste.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitiser after contact with the face mask.
- If the face mask is used for a short time and is to be used again, it must be stored in a clean bag or container until the next use and touched as little as possible when it is put back on. Disinfect your hands afterwards.
- Keep in mind that traditional face masks are manufactured as disposable products, but if nothing happens during use and they have not become damp, it is okay to use them for up to 4 hours; this must be evaluated each time.

Reusable face masks

- Reusable face masks can also be used, in public.
- They must be made of a washable material and must be washed at a minimum of 60°C daily.
- The same rules apply to reusable masks as apply to disposable masks. Their exterior becomes contaminated with use, and they should be touched as little as possible.
- Wash or disinfect your hands after touching the mask.
- Store them in a clean bag or container between use and until washing.

Keep in mind:

- Damp and contaminated face masks are useless and can increase the risk of infection.
- A face mask that does not cover both mouth and nose is useless.

What type of face masks are used to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

1. Disposable "surgery masks" with elastic at the sides and built-in wire to shape it to the nose



These masks are made of three layers of paper-like material, and in the middle is a layer that filters particles. These face masks are of different thicknesses, absorb different amounts of moisture and have different filtration properties. These types of face masks catch droplets coming from the respiratory tract and the saliva of the wearer, so they are less likely to spread to others and the environment. They also reduce the chance that the person wearing the mask will get the virus.

Hands need to be cleaned before the surgery mask is put on and after it is touched or removed. The surgery mask shall be tight to the face; cover the nose, mouth and chin; and care should be taken not to touch the mask on the face. The surgery mask needs to be replaced when it has become damp or

damaged. The maximum use time is 4 hours. Used masks shall be disposed of in general use rubbish bins.

- [How to use a face mask - video](#)
- [Safe use of surgery masks - poster](#)

2. Reusable face masks (cloth masks)



They can be bought or sewn at home. [A workshop agreement](#) on face masks has been published by the European standards organisation CEN, with the participation of an Icelandic representative. It defines the requirements for the production of face masks, testing, use and washing, as well as instructions on home-made face masks. Such face masks are suitable for the general public; they can reduce the spread of the virus to others from those who wear the mask, as long as it does not have a valve that lets unfiltered air out. The reusable face mask does not absolve the user from paying attention to the distance limits. There are many different types of reusable face masks, but they need to cover the nose, mouth and chin; be tight to the face; be multi-layered (at least two layers and preferably three layers), and be made of a material that can be washed preferably at 60°C. Close woven material can be used, and between the outer and inner layers, there shall be a layer (or two) of thicker material.



Materials used in such face masks must allow air to pass through, be sufficiently soft and flexible to provide sealing to the face, not be too hot, not be irritating and not be resistant to washing at 60°C. Hands need to be cleaned before the face is put on and after it is touched or removed. At a minimum, a reusable face mask must be washed daily.

CEN emphasises:

- Reusable face masks do not protect against chemicals.
- Reusable face masks cannot be frozen to remove contaminants. Viral or bacterial material remains and does not lose its ability to infect with freezing.
- The reusable face mask does not absolve the user from paying attention to the distance limits.
- It is not recommended to boil reusable face masks at 100°C unless the manufacturer specifically recommends it; it is unlikely that the material can withstand this.

3. Face masks with exhalation valves



The purpose of a face mask is to prevent airborne droplets from reaching others. If face masks have a one-way valve or an air hole that releases unfiltered air, droplets that the person wearing the mask exhales can be transmitted to others. Such a face mask therefore does not reduce the risk of infection from a person with COVID-19 to others. The Chief Epidemiologist does not recommend the use of a face mask with a valve.

REMEMBER!

A face mask is not useful if it is worn on the neck, forehead, nose, under the nose, under the chin, dangling on the ear or on the arm.



4. Face shield/cover



Transparent plastic covers that cover the face are primarily intended to protect the eyes of those wearing such covers. They can prevent droplets from landing on the face and also prevent the person from touching their face. They are made of different materials and different shapes but should reach from the forehead to well below the chin. These covers are open at the bottom and sides and do not prevent the spread of droplets during coughing or sneezing and therefore do not provide the same protection as a mask. Hands must be cleaned before and after removing the cover, and the plastic cover itself should not be touched. The face shield must be washed with soap and water or disinfected after use, if reused. Healthcare professionals treating COVID-19 patients who are wearing a face shield shall wear a mask underneath.

The face of the person wearing the face shield is visible, and they do not obstruct speech, so they could be used in certain situations. Those who are unable to wear a face mask due to health reasons or due to deafness, and who use a face shield instead, should wear a shield that goes well over the sides of the face and down to the chin or use a shield with a hood.

5. Protective respirator masks (fine-particle masks FFP2, (N95), FFP3, (N99))



Such masks are specially designed for use by healthcare professionals caring for people with diseases transmitted by airborne infections, e.g. COVID-19 patients, as airway intervention may be required and there may be a risk of droplets and mist from the patient. Such masks must be fitted to the person in question to ensure that the correct size is used. These masks do not need to be used in society.
