



Face coverings

Covid-19 can be passed to other people when someone who has the virus coughs or sneezes.

Some people wear face coverings to try and stop Covid-19 being spread. Anyone can have Covid-19 but not have any symptoms. Keeping 2 meters apart from anyone who does not live with you or is part of your extended household, helps to stop the spread.

However sometimes it is not possible to have a 2 meter distance, and we can help stop the spread by wearing a face covering in busy places.

Who should wear a face covering?

The Scottish Government are now advising that everyone, over the age of 5 should wear a face covering when it is not possible for people to physically distance from one another, for example in shops or busy places.

As of the 22nd of June, face coverings are mandatory on all public transport, this includes, buses, taxis, trains, ferries, stations and airports.

As of the 10th of July, face coverings were made mandatory in shops.

As of the 7th of August, face coverings were also made mandatory in most public indoor settings, except places where you eat and drink (for example, pubs, cafes and restaurants). [Here](#) is the latest list of settings where you must wear a face covering.

What is a face covering?

A face covering can be made of cloth or other fabric in which you can breathe through, for example a scarf. A face covering must cover your mouth and nose.

This does not mean you have to buy or wear surgical or medical masks; these should be left for medical professionals only.

When putting on or taking off your face covering it is important that you wash your hands first or use hand gel and try not to touch your face.

If you are using a reusable face covering this must be washed at 60 degrees and stored in a plastic bag until you use it next. You could use a sandwich or freezer bag that is sealable to store your face covering until the next time you need it.

It is important to remember that a face covering should not be used as an alternative to physical distancing, hand washing or using your elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. These are still the best way to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

What are the exemptions to wearing a face covering?

Face coverings apply to all people and staff in public areas, however, there are exemptions to this.

The Scottish Government states the people who are exempt from wearing face coverings are:

- Children under 5 years old
- Police officers or an emergency responder, for example ambulance crews.
- Staff such as drivers and who are physically separated from other staff and passengers by a screen, other fixed barrier.
- Person leading an act of worship or service/ceremony, for example a funeral, marriage or civil partnership, where there is either a screen or fixed barrier, or the distance of 2 meters is maintained.

As well as the above, the Scottish Government has also said that you do not have to wear a face covering if:

- If you have a health condition or disability, this includes hidden disabilities such as autism.
- If you are providing care to someone with a health condition or disability, and a face covering causes difficulty, pain or severe distress or anxiety to the wearer or the person in the care of the wearer.
- You cannot apply a covering and wear it in the proper manner safely and consistently.
- You are seeking medical assistance.
- You are avoiding injury, illness or escaping the right of harm.
- You have a reasonable need to eat or drink.
- You need to take medication.
- You need to communicate with someone who relies on lip reading and/or facial expressions to communicate.
- A relevant person, such as a police officer or an emergency responder, asks you to remove your face covering.

What does this mean?

Some people might feel comfortable to wear face coverings, however, for others, this may be difficult.

There are various reasons why an autistic person might find face coverings difficult, such as:

- The feeling it has on their skin
- A sudden change to their normal routine
- Not being able to see parts of their or others faces

If wearing a face covering causes you or someone you are supporting stress or extreme anxiety, then you do not have to wear one.

You can find the Scottish Government's guidance on wearing face coverings [here](#).

This document was updated on the 12th of August, 2020. This information has been written as clearly as possible for a wide readership. If you require support with this information then please make contact with our [Autism Support Team](#).