



# COVID-19 & Mandatory Face Masks

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## Face Coverings now Mandatory State Wide in Victoria

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*The Victorian Government announced that everyone in **regional Victoria must wear a face covering** whenever they leave home. That means face masks will be mandatory across Victoria, with the same exceptions that currently apply in metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire. A face covering needs to cover both your nose and mouth. It could be a face mask or shield.*

The rule, which already applies to people within metropolitan Melbourne and Mitchell Shire, will come into effect for Regional Victoria from 11:59pm on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, and the fine for not wearing one will be \$200.

### **What does wearing a face covering mean?**

Victorians must wear a face covering whenever they leave their home, unless an exception applies. A face covering needs to cover both your nose and mouth. It could be a face mask or shield.

A face mask is the recommended face covering. A face mask includes any paper or textile covering designed or made to be worn over the nose and mouth to protect the wearer. It does not have to be medical grade and you can make your own. There are instructions on how to make a mask on the Department's website - [how to make your own mask \(PDF\)](#).

If a face mask is not available other forms of face covering may be used such as a scarf or bandana.

A face shield means any film made from plastic or other transparent material designed or made to be worn like a visor, covering from the wearer's forehead to below the chin area and wrapping around the sides of the wearer's face, to provide the wearer protection.

### **As an employer, do I need to require my staff to wear face coverings?**

Yes, you are required to ensure your employees wear face coverings if they are working, unless an exception applies.

### **Lawful excuses or exceptions for not wearing a face covering**

A face covering is not required in the following circumstances:

- Infants and children under the age of 12 years.
- A person who is affected by a relevant medical condition - including problems with their breathing, a serious skin condition on the face, a disability or a mental health condition. This also includes persons who are communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to that person's health and safety related to their work, as determined through OH&S guidelines.
- When directed by police to remove the face covering to ascertain identity.
- The person is travelling in a vehicle by themselves or with other members of their household.
- When consuming food, drink, medication or when smoking/vaping.
- When entering or inside a financial institution, like a bank.
- During emergencies.

*You must carry a face covering with you when leaving home for one of the four reasons, even if you don't need to wear it while undertaking your current activity, for example you can take your face covering off to eat.*

### **Do employees in the factory have to wear a face covering?**

Yes. Employees in the factory will have to wear a face covering unless they meet any of the criteria for exception such as a medical condition or if wearing a face covering creates a risk to the person related to their work, as determined through OH&S guidelines.

### **Do employees need to wear a face covering at my desk even if it is 1.5 metres away from others?**

Yes, if they live in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire they must wear a face covering when they leave their home for one of the four reasons, which includes working, unless an exception applies. If they work in an enclosed office on their own, they don't have to wear a mask while at their desk. If someone enters their space and when they leave it, you need to wear a mask.

### **Do employees need to wear a face covering at home if they are working from home and it is currently considered their workplace?**

If they are working from home, they do not need to wear a face covering, unless they are [caring for someone](#) at home who has coronavirus (COVID-19).

### **Can employees take their face covering off when eating or drinking?**

Yes. They can take their face covering off when eating or drinking. They should maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres and practice good hygiene.

Eating and drinking should not be used as an excuse not to wear a face covering. Employees must use common sense and wear a face covering at all times possible.

### **Can employees take off their face covering if they find it uncomfortable whilst working?**

It is important that employees wear their face covering when at work, but some people may require short breaks from wearing their face covering. When they do so, ensure they are not near other people, and follow this advice when removing your face covering:

- Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Don't touch the front of the mask or your face.
- Carefully remove the mask by grasping the ear loops or untying the ties. For masks with a pair of ties, unfasten the bottom one first, then the top one.
- If the mask has filters, remove them and throw them away. Fold the mask and put it directly into the laundry or into a disposable or washable bag for laundering. Single use surgical masks should be disposed of responsibly.
- Clean hands again.

*Only a short break should be required.*

### **Enforcement of Rule**

#### **What happens if I don't wear a face covering?**

The Victorian Government are asking everyone in Victoria to wear face coverings when they leave home to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Fines of \$200 may be issued to people who do not wear a face covering unless they have a valid reason for an exception.

### **Will I be fined for not carrying a face covering with me?**

You must carry a face covering with you unless you have a lawful excuse for not wearing a face covering such as a medical condition or are under the age of 12. You can be fined if you don't wear or carry a face covering.

### **Where can I buy face masks?**

Cloth and single-use masks are available from wholesale and retail outlets including chemists, workwear and safety equipment providers, office suppliers and hardware stores. If you prefer to support Victorian mask manufacturers; a [directory of local makers](#) is available on the Business Victoria's website. Otherwise, FTMA has done a little searching for you as to wear you can bulk buy masks, and we found these Australian businesses (below). These are just suggestions and some plants may choose to buy locally home-made washable masks. If you do this, please ensure they have been made in accordance with the DHHS recommendations.

[Westlab](#)

[Softmed](#)

[Cubic Promote](#)

[National Health Australia](#)

[Business Victoria's Mask Manufacturing Directory](#)