



A guide to face coverings

PROTECTING YOUR CO-WORKERS AND PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

FACE COVERINGS

Purpose

Cloth face coverings help slow the spread of COVID-19 when combined with everyday preventive actions and social distancing in public settings.

Information

- COVID-19 is spread by droplets. When an infected person coughs or sneezes without covering their mouth and nose, droplets containing the virus spread a short distance and can settle on surrounding surfaces.
- COVID-19 is mostly spread following close contact with people who have the virus and have symptoms. You may also get infected if you touch surfaces or objects contaminated with droplets and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes.
- Staying at home if you're unwell, washing your hands frequently with soap and water and practising social and physical distancing where possible and practical remain the most important ways to stop the spread of infections, including COVID-19.
- Employers operating on-site (construction, maintenance or emergency call-out) must ensure they protect their workforce and control the potential spread of COVID-19.
- Wearing a protective face covering is now mandatory on public transport in Scotland.
- The British Medical Association (BMA) advised on the wearing of face coverings several weeks ago in areas where people cannot socially distance.
- Cloth face coverings are not respirators or disposable facemasks and do not protect people wearing them from exposures.
- Cloth face coverings are only intended to help contain the wearer's respiratory droplets from being spread.
- There is some evidence to indicate that, used in this way, cloth face coverings can help slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 among asymptomatic individuals.
- Wearing face coverings may help people who unknowingly have the virus from spreading it to others.

The following must be carefully considered if you choose to wear a cloth face covering to slow the spread of COVID-19:

1. Cloth face coverings

Cloth face coverings, whether provided by the employer or brought from home by the worker, are not respirators or disposable facemasks and do not protect the worker wearing them from exposures.

Cloth face coverings are only intended to help contain the wearer's respiratory droplets from being spread. A face covering is anything that covers your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably.

- A cloth face covering is a material you wear that covers the nose and mouth
- Wearing a cloth face covering in public may reduce the spread of coronavirus.
- It may also help to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets from people infected with coronavirus
- Cloth face coverings may help to stop people who are not aware they have the virus from spreading it
- Face coverings are not the same as face masks.

2. How can face coverings help prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Asymptomatic individuals

Being asymptomatic means that you have no symptoms. However, there are reports of loss of sense of smell in asymptomatic people. If you are asymptomatic, it is possible to have coronavirus without showing symptoms.

A face covering helps contain small droplets that come out of your mouth and/or nose when you talk, sneeze or cough.

If you have COVID-19 and are not showing symptoms, a face covering can help to reduce your chance of spreading the infection to others. If you are healthy, a face covering may protect you from larger droplets from people around you.

3. When should you wear a face covering?

Face coverings on public transport are now compulsory in Scotland. This is in line with new World Health Organization (WHO) advice, that states non-medical face coverings should be worn in public where social distancing is not possible.

Anyone travelling by bus, train, ferry, tram, plane or taxi in Scotland should wear a face covering to help reduce the risk of coronavirus transmission.

Some passengers will be exempt from the new rules including:

- Children under 11
- People with disabilities
- Those with breathing difficulties
- Anyone travelling with someone who relies on lip reading.

What other places should you consider wearing a face covering?

- When staying two metres apart from people is difficult.
- When using shops and shopping centres. Face coverings are mandatory in shops in Scotland from 10 July.
- When visiting anyone who is more at risk from coronavirus – such as people aged 70 or over or people who are medically vulnerable
- In an enclosed indoor space with other people
- Workers may additionally wear a face covering (e.g. a cloth/cotton mask) although wearing a face covering is not required by law. The government guidance on face coverings says:

“Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect (the wearer) but it may protect others if (the wearer is) infected but has not developed symptoms”.

Face coverings are not a *replacement* for the other ways of managing risk, including:

- Minimising the time spent in contact with others
- Using fixed teams
- Keeping teams small
- Increased hand washing
- Increased cleaning regime.

The government does “not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management”.

THE MOST IMPORTANT INFECTION PREVENTION CONTROL MEASURES AGAINST THE VIRUS ARE:



HAND HYGIENE – Frequent handwashing



SOCIAL DISTANCING – You should stay two metres apart from anyone from outside your household

FACE COVERINGS (CONT)

4. What makes a suitable face covering?

Materials you may want to consider when making a face covering due to their ability to capture particles while still remaining breathable could include scarves, hand towels or any items made of cotton or linen.

Other materials for consideration could be:

- Tea towels
- Cotton t-shirts
- Cotton material such as pillowcases.

Thicker, more densely woven cotton fabrics are best, such as quilting cotton or cotton sheets. Hold the fabric up to the light – the fewer tiny holes you can see, the better it will work to filter droplets. Ideally, use fabric that doesn't allow droplets to pass through while ensuring you can still breathe properly. Guidance on how to make a face covering can be found in the further information section.

5. Considerations for the use of cloth face coverings

Cloth face coverings in the work environment should be used in addition to other control measures, including engineering controls such as implementing social distance practices and physical partitions or barriers; and administrative controls such as frequent cleaning and disinfection protocols.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after donning, touching or removing cloth face coverings

- Ideally face coverings should go over the nose and below the chin
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
- Be secured with ties or ear loops to ensure the covering stays in place
- Include multiple layers of fabric where possible.
- Allow for breathing without restriction during normal activities
- Think about where to store your face covering when not in use and before washing
- Particular attention should be paid to where the face covering may be placed when not in use to avoid the risk of spread through potential COVID-19 contaminated surfaces
- Reusable face coverings should be laundered before each daily use.

6. Making your own face covering?

Particle size

Virus particles are tiny, ranging from 0.1 to 0.3 micron. A 40-micron-size particle is visible with the naked eye, anything smaller, you need specialised equipment to see it.

If made correctly, a face covering can help to reduce the transmission of the virus from the wearer to others by impeding large droplets and spray produced by a cough or sneeze. It can also reduce the transmission of the virus from others to the wearer.

IF YOU EXPERIENCE ANY OF THE SYMPTOMS BELOW STAY AT HOME AND SELF ISOLATE

The poster features the HM Government logo on the left and the NHS logo on the right. In the center, four circular icons represent symptoms: a thermometer for high temperature, a person coughing, a person with a red 'X' over their mouth for loss of taste, and a person with a red 'X' over their nose for loss of smell. Below these icons, the text reads: 'HIGH TEMPERATURE OR NEW CONTINUOUS COUGH OR LOSS OF TASTE OR SMELL? Find out how to get a test, and how long to isolate, at [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)'. On the bottom left, it says 'CORONAVIRUS STAY ALERT TO THE SYMPTOMS'. On the bottom right, a yellow box with green borders contains the text: 'STAY ALERT CONTROL THE VIRUS SAVE LIVES'.

7. Key sources of information and advice

- **How to wear and make a face covering**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering>

- **Scottish Government advice on face coverings**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-2-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/>

- **Scottish Government**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-construction-sector-guidance/pages/related-guidance/>

- **Transport Scotland**

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-how-to-travel-safely/>

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- Association of Consultancy and Engineering (ACE)
- Association of Project Safety (APS)
- British Constructional Steelwork Association (BCSA)
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- Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA Scotland)
- Construction Plant-hire Association (CPA)
- DHF
- Electrical Distributors' Association (EDA)
- Federation of Master Builders (FMB)
- Finishes and Interiors Sector (FIS)
- Lift and Escalator Industry Association (LEIA)
- National Federation of Roofing Contractors (NFRC)
- Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS)
- Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)
- Scaffolding Association
- Scottish Building Federation (SBF)
- Scottish Contractors Group
- Scottish Plant Owners Association (SPOA)
- Single Ply Roofing Association (SPRA)
- SELECT
- SNIPEF
- Stone Federation (GB)

Further information



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This document has been prepared by way of guidance and anyone who proposes to use it should consider the details based on their business's obligations and, if necessary, take independent advice either from their own trade or professional body or legal advisors. This will of course include recognition of all relevant health and safety legislation. Again, your trade or professional body will be able to assist with this.
