

# Face mask rules

Wearing a face mask is mandatory in some settings. Learn about when you need to wear a face mask, when you can remove it and who is exempt.

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## Common questions about the rules

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In local government areas where the stay at home rules apply, when you leave home you must carry a face mask with you at all times.

## Who needs to wear a mask

- [At home or visiting other households](#)
- [Removing your mask to communicate with someone](#)
- [Visiting residents in aged care](#)
- [People who wear traditional or religious garments](#)
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## Types of masks

- [Tips on wearing a face mask](#)
- [How a mask is defined under the public health order](#)
- [Face shields](#)

## Exemptions

### When you can remove your mask

A person may remove their mask if they are:

- eating or drinking
- communicating with another person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- at work and the nature of the work makes the wearing of a fitted face covering a risk to the person's, or another persons' health and safety, or where clear enunciation or visibility of your mouth is essential
- asked to remove their mask for identity purposes
- in an emergency situation
- doing exercise
  - in one of the 12 LGAs of concern a mask can be removed if you are doing strenuous exercise
  - in other areas of the state, a mask can be removed if doing other types of physical exercise
- at a correctional centre, place of custody, or hospital
- a resident at an aged care were facility
- a guest in a hotel/motel room and in your room
- in the process of getting married
- working alone in an office (until another person enters)
- in a vehicle alone or with another person from your household.

### Eating and drinking

You can take your face mask off when you are eating or drinking.

To avoid the risk of contamination, NSW Health recommends you put on a new, clean mask when you have finished eating or drinking. If this is not possible, remember to wash or sanitise your hands.

You should always use hand sanitiser or wash your hands before and after changing your face mask.

Remember, stay 1.5 metres apart from people you don't live with.

### Lawful reasons for not wearing a face mask

The public health order includes a number of lawful reasons for not wearing a mask.

You are not required to wear a mask if you have a physical or mental health illness or condition, or disability, that makes wearing a mask unsuitable. For example, if you have a skin condition, an intellectual disability, autism or trauma, you are not required to wear a mask.

Please be respectful to people who are not wearing a mask as the reasons for not wearing a mask are not always visible or obvious.

See the requirements for providing [proof of exemption](#) for not wearing a mask.

### Proof of exemption for not wearing a mask

If you cannot wear a face mask because of a disability, physical or mental health illness or condition, you must carry either

- a medical certificate or letter signed by a registered health practitioner (such as a doctor) or a registered NDIS provider or
- a statutory declaration.

### Proof of exemption and identity

If you are in a situation where masks are mandatory, a police officer can ask you to confirm the lawful reason you are not wearing a face mask.

If asked by a police officer, you must show them either

- a medical certificate or letter from the health practitioner or NDIS provider or
- a statutory declaration.

You must also carry and produce evidence of your name and address to a police officer if requested.

A statutory declaration will require you to identify your disability, physical or mental health illness or condition and declare

- you have the physical or mental health illness or condition or disability and
- the physical or mental health illness or condition, or disability makes wearing a fitted face covering unsuitable

### Penalty notices

Officers will issue a penalty notice if you clearly refuse to wear a mask without a lawful reason.

### Temporary removal of your mask

If you are eating or drinking, or there is an emergency, you may remove your mask.

You should replace your mask as soon as possible after eating or drinking or when an emergency situation has ended.

### Children, toddlers under 2 years, and babies

Masks should not be worn by toddlers under 2 years of age and babies, as they are a choking and suffocation risk.

Children 12 years and under are exempt but are encouraged to wear masks where practicable.

### School staff and students

### People with disability

It may not be suitable for some [people with disability](#) to wear a face mask.

See the requirements for providing [proof of exemption](#) for not wearing a mask.

## Related information

- [How wearing a face mask may help](#)
- [How to wear a face mask](#)
- [Types of face masks](#)
- [NSW COVID-19 case locations](#)
- [COVID-19 rules](#)
- [COVID-19 public health orders and related legislation](#)

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