

COVID-19

Face coverings in retail premises and other public places

This document is intended to give clear guidance on the wearing of face coverings in public settings. The guidance is targeted at the three main groups of people affected by the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Protection Framework) Order 2021 requirement for the use of face coverings. The guidance includes consideration of people who have a physical or sensory disability, mental health or other health condition that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable.

The three groups are:

- Businesses
- General Public
- Affected People

Messages for Businesses

- Face coverings are one of the tools we have for helping to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Under the COVID-19 Protection Framework legislation, face coverings are mandatory under the Orange and Red settings for people aged 12 years or older on flights, public transport, in taxis, retail and public facilities, and encouraged whenever leaving the house.
- Face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The virus spreads by droplets, so face coverings are a way we can protect ourselves and others. They are particularly useful when physical distancing is not possible.
- An exception to this rule is when a person has a physical or mental illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable. Some reasons why wearing a face covering might be unsuitable could be:
 - Someone who has a physical disability which make putting on and taking off face coverings hard to do;
 - Someone who has had a traumatic experience that means wearing a face covering triggers anxiety or panic attacks;
 - When you are communicating with someone who has a disability which makes it hard to communicate effectively (for example: someone who is autistic, deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, has a learning disability, etc).

- People for whom a face covering is unsuitable need to be able to access businesses and services just like everyone else. Businesses need to ensure they do not discriminate against people who are exempt from wearing a face covering.
- It's not always obvious why a face covering is unsuitable for someone, so it's important to be kind, respect people's privacy, and don't jump to any conclusions. We encourage businesses to use their discretion and to be kind and realistic about people's circumstances. People who have a physical or mental illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable, are not required to prove this. If they are exempt, it is enough for them to say so – they do not have to go into details.
- Businesses may ask whether people are able to wear a face covering. However, it is inappropriate to ask people for personal health information.
- Some people for whom wearing a face covering is unsuitable may have an exemption card that they are able to show you; but having an exemption card is not a legal requirement and people who are exempt from wearing a face covering are not obliged to show you an exemption card.
- Businesses do not need to stop people without face coverings from entering their premises. Businesses will not be fined or penalised if they do not enforce a face covering rule for customers and visitors.
- It is always important to enable other good health, hygiene and safety practices at your place of business to help keep your workers and customers safe. This includes:
 - Your staff will need to wear a face covering themselves (unless they are exempt).
 - Displaying the official QR codes for people to scan in as well as an alternative system of recording visitors who don't use the NZ COVID Tracer app.
 - Encouraging physical distancing where possible.
- If businesses suspect that someone is being dishonest, they can refer the matter to the Police. People who refuse to wear a face covering and falsely claim to be exempt from wearing a face covering when they are not, could be liable for an infringement fee of \$1,000; or up to \$4,000 if the matter goes to court.

Messages for the General Public

- Face coverings are one of the tools we have for helping to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Under the COVID-19 Protection Framework legislation, face coverings are mandatory under the Orange and Red settings for people aged 12 years or older on flights, public transport, in taxis, retail and public facilities, and encouraged whenever leaving the house.
- Face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The virus spreads by droplets, so face coverings are a way we can protect ourselves and others. They are particularly useful when physical distancing is not possible.
- An exception to this rule is when a person has a physical or mental illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable. Some reasons why wearing a face covering might be unsuitable could be:

- Someone who has a physical disability which make putting on and taking off face coverings hard to do;
- Someone who has had a traumatic experience that means wearing a face covering triggers anxiety or panic attacks;
- When you are communicating with someone who has a disability which makes it hard to communicate effectively (for example: someone who is autistic, deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, has a learning disability, etc).
- People for whom a face covering is unsuitable need to be able to access businesses and services just like everyone else. Businesses and others need to ensure they do not discriminate against people who are exempt from wearing a face covering.
- It's not always obvious why a face covering is unsuitable for someone, so it's important to be kind, respect people's privacy, and don't jump to any conclusions. People who have a physical or mental illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable, are not required to prove this. If they are exempt, it is enough for them to say so – they do not have to go into details
- It is reasonable for a business owner or employee to check whether someone is exempt from the rule to wear a face covering. It is inappropriate to ask people for personal health information.
- Some people for whom wearing a face covering is unsuitable may have an exemption card that they are able to show; but having an exemption card is not a legal requirement and people who are exempt from wearing a face covering are not obliged to show an exemption card.
- If you are exempt, you can enter businesses. You should not worry if a business owner or employee approaches you to ask whether you are able to wear a face covering. They are just ensuring your safety and the safety of others.
- It is always important that businesses enable other good health, hygiene and safety practices to help keep workers and customers safe. This includes:
 - Staff will need to wear a face covering themselves (unless they are exempt).
 - Displaying the official QR codes for people to scan in as well as an alternative system of recording visitors who don't use the NZ COVID Tracer app.
 - Encouraging physical distancing where possible.
- Wearing a face covering, is one of the ways you can help keep you and others safe. Businesses who have concerns about whether someone is being dishonest may choose to involve the Police.
- People who refuse to wear a face covering and falsely claim to be exempt from wearing a face covering when they are not, could be liable for an infringement fee of \$1,000; or up to \$4,000 if the matter goes to court.

Messages for Affected People

- Face coverings are one of the tools we have for helping to stop the spread of COVID-19.
- Under the COVID-19 Protection Framework legislation, face coverings are mandatory under the Orange and Red settings for people aged 12 years or older on flights, public transport, in taxis, retail and public facilities, and encouraged whenever leaving the house.

- Face coverings help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The virus spreads by droplets, so face coverings are a way we can protect ourselves and others. They are particularly useful when physical distancing is not possible.
- You are exempt from this rule if you have a physical or mental illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable. Some reasons why wearing a face covering might be unsuitable could be:
 - Someone who has a physical disability which make putting on and taking off face coverings hard to do;
 - Someone who has had a traumatic experience that means wearing a face covering triggers anxiety or panic attacks;
 - When you are communicating with someone who has a disability which makes it hard to communicate effectively (**for example:** someone who is autistic, deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, has a learning disability, etc).
- If you are exempt from wearing a face covering, you can still to access businesses and services just like everyone else. Businesses need to ensure they do not discriminate against people who are exempt from wearing a face covering.
- Sometimes the reason why a face covering is unsuitable for you is not obvious to others. If you have a physical or mental illness or condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable, you are not required to prove this.
- You should not worry if a business owner or employee approaches you to ask whether you are able to wear a face covering. They are just ensuring your safety and the safety of others. It is inappropriate for a business owner or employee to enquire about the nature of your disability or condition. But it is reasonable for them to check whether you are exempt from the rule to wear a face covering. If you are exempt, it is enough for you to say so – you do not have to go into details.
- If you have an exemption card then this can be shown to business and service providers, but having a card is not a legal requirement. If you are exempt, you can enter businesses. You should not worry if a business owner or employee approaches you to ask whether you are able to wear a face covering. They are just ensuring your safety and the safety of others.
- It is always important that businesses enable other good health, hygiene and safety practices to help keep workers and customers safe. This includes:
 - Staff will need to wear a face covering themselves (unless they are exempt).
 - Displaying the official QR codes for people to scan in as well as an alternative system of recording visitors who don't use the NZ COVID Tracer app.
 - Encouraging physical distancing where possible.
- People who refuse to wear a face covering and falsely claim to be exempt from wearing a face covering when they are not, could be liable for an infringement fee of \$1,000; or up to \$4,000 if the matter goes to court.