



## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) information on the use of surgical masks

**There is an outbreak of COVID-19 (formerly known as novel coronavirus) in mainland China.**

### Should I wear a surgical mask?

#### General public

Surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing people who have coronavirus disease from spreading it to others. If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask as there is little evidence supporting the widespread use of surgical masks in healthy people to prevent transmission in public.

**If** you are being self-isolated due to one of the following circumstances:

- You have travelled from mainland China within the past 14 days; or
- You have been in close contact with a confirmed case of coronavirus;

**Then**, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- You need to leave your home for any reason and be in public areas;
- You are visiting a medical facility; or
- You have symptoms and other people are present in the same room as you.

#### Suspected case

If you are suspected of having coronavirus disease, your primary care provider will give you a surgical mask to wear when you enter the emergency department or general practice. You should follow their advice on how to fit and wear the surgical mask. You should continue to use the surgical mask in all public places until you are advised otherwise by public health authorities.

If you are suspected of having coronavirus, you can find more information here:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-information-sheet-for-people-with-a-suspected-case-yi-si-bing-li-huan-zhe-xu-zhi>

#### Confirmed case

If you are confirmed to have coronavirus disease, follow the advice of your primary care provider and public health authorities on wearing a surgical mask. You should wear a surgical mask if you need to leave the house; when you are in contact with health care workers; or, when you have symptoms and other people are in the same room.

#### Health care workers

Health care workers should follow specific advice on personal protective equipment when looking after patients who are confirmed to have, or suspected of having, COVID-19.

Information for health care workers looking after patients in hospitals is available at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/interim-recommendations-for-the-use-of->

[personal-protective-equipment-ppe-during-hospital-care-of-people-with-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/interim-advice-on-non-inpatient-care-of-persons-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-including-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe)

Information for health care workers looking after non-inpatients is available at:  
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/interim-advice-on-non-inpatient-care-of-persons-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-including-use-of-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

## Pathology specimen collectors

Pathology specimen collectors should follow the advice for health care workers above and wear appropriate PPE when collecting specimens from confirmed or suspected cases.

## Airline passengers and staff

Passengers returning from mainland China on repatriated flights will be provided with specific information on the use of surgical masks.

For all other passengers on airplanes, if you are not in self-isolation and do not have symptoms, then you do not need to wear a surgical mask. If you do have symptoms, ask a member of the cabin crew for a surgical mask.

If available, a surgical mask should be given to any ill passenger or crew member to wear. If a crew member needs to interact with an ill person, they may wish to wear a surgical mask and follow existing agency infection prevention work instructions and PPE requirements.

Additional information for airline industry staff can be found at:  
<https://health.govcms.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-airline-industry-including-flight-crew>

## How do I get a surgical mask?

If you suspect you are ill with coronavirus disease, you should seek health care from a hospital or your general practice GP, where you can also get further information on surgical masks.

The Australian Government is supporting general practices that are seeing patients with suspected coronavirus and are unable to access sufficient surgical masks. These surgical masks should be available through primary health networks (PHNs). General practices should contact their local PHN in the first instance and outline their needs.

General practices and medical practitioners are encouraged to refer to the Department of Health website which includes specific information on treating possible coronavirus patients.

## How can we help prevent the spread of coronavirus?

Practising good hand and sneeze/cough hygiene is the best defence against most viruses. You should:

- wash your hands frequently with soap and water, before and after eating, and after going to the toilet
- cover your cough and sneeze, dispose of tissues, and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser, and
- if unwell, avoid contact with others (touching, kissing, hugging, and other intimate contact).

## More information

While coronavirus is of concern, it is important to remember that most people displaying symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat or tiredness are likely suffering with a cold or other respiratory illness—not coronavirus.

For the latest advice, information and resources, go to [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on 1800 020 080. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available at [www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts](http://www.health.gov.au/state-territory-contacts)

If you have concerns about your health, speak to a doctor.