



25 January 2023

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s 9(2)(a)

By email: s 9(2)(a)  
Ref: H2022018342

Tēnā koe s 9(2)(a)

### Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) on 7 December 2022, for information regarding face masks. You requested:

*“Documentation, including the scientific papers and experts’ opinions from meeting briefings and minutes. The meetings are those that the New Zealand government and health officials held with the experts (including themselves) for the assessment of the mask mandate or its recommendation. The time frame would be from the beginning, in 2020, when bandanas over the mouth were accepted until now, when only a select type of face mask is accepted.”*

Evidence indicates that the use of masks/face coverings in the community provide benefit in reducing SARS-CoV-2 infection. A [rapid review](#) from the Republic of Ireland that found that “the evidence within this rapid evidence update points towards face mask use in the community providing a potentially beneficial effect in reducing SARS-CoV-2 infection, alongside a lack of evidence of significant harm associated with their use.”

This rapid review included the following evidence: A [rapid review](#) from Norway concludes that there is evidence that medical facemasks can protect people from respiratory infections in community settings. This conclusion was based on 13 observational studies, the majority of which found a benefit from the use of masks: A [scientific brief](#) from the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) concludes that research supports the use of masks in the community to reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and that the benefit is derived from a combination of source control and personal protection.

As part of reviewing international evidence, Manatū Hauora considers other advice from international organisations including the CDC, Public Health England, the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Australian jurisdictions, and a range of scientific and medical journals. The information is collated through Ministry specialist technical advisory groups whose membership include a variety of expert professions such as infection prevention and control, public health, infectious diseases, microbiology, and primary care. When reviewing evidence, Manatū Hauora ensures it is applicable to the New Zealand situation.

There is a range of information and research that is publicly available and addresses your concerns, including publicly available studies and key information supporting mask efficiency. This can be found in the links below:

- [www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-use-face-masks-community](http://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-use-face-masks-community).

- [www.higa.ie/sites/default/files/2020-12/Use-of-face-masks-in-the-community\\_Rapid-evidence-update.pdf](http://www.higa.ie/sites/default/files/2020-12/Use-of-face-masks-in-the-community_Rapid-evidence-update.pdf).
- [www.fhi.no/globalassets/dokumenterfiler/rapporter/2020/should-individuals-in-the-community-without-respiratory-symptoms-wear-facemasks-to-reduce-the-spread-of-covid-19-update-1-report-2020-v1.pdf](http://www.fhi.no/globalassets/dokumenterfiler/rapporter/2020/should-individuals-in-the-community-without-respiratory-symptoms-wear-facemasks-to-reduce-the-spread-of-covid-19-update-1-report-2020-v1.pdf).
- [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/masking-science-sars-cov2.html).

Please note, Manatū Hauora does not conduct scientific research or studies. I refer you to the online scientific studies for further information: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/> or <https://www.nejm.org/>.

Please refer to the below previously released responses regarding masks:

- [www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202006250\\_20\\_oct\\_2020.pdf](http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202006250_20_oct_2020.pdf).
- [www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202008732\\_15\\_dec\\_2020\\_0.pdf](http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202008732_15_dec_2020_0.pdf).

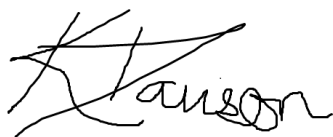
Publicly available studies you may be interested in can be found here:

- [www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/csu\\_23\\_july\\_2021\\_delta\\_-\\_viral\\_load\\_and\\_incubation\\_period\\_masks\\_and\\_hepa\\_filters\\_impact\\_on\\_aerosols.pdf](http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/csu_23_july_2021_delta_-_viral_load_and_incubation_period_masks_and_hepa_filters_impact_on_aerosols.pdf).
- [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7027e1-H.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7027e1-H.pdf)
- [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7027e1-H.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/pdfs/mm7027e1-H.pdf)
- [www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/csu\\_23\\_july\\_2021\\_delta\\_-\\_viral\\_load\\_and\\_incubation\\_period\\_masks\\_and\\_hepa\\_filters\\_impact\\_on\\_aerosols.pdf](http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/csu_23_july_2021_delta_-_viral_load_and_incubation_period_masks_and_hepa_filters_impact_on_aerosols.pdf)

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: [www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests](http://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests).

Nāku noa, nā



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