

21 September 2020

[REDACTED]
By email: [REDACTED]
Ref: H202006341

Dear [REDACTED]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) which was transferred from the office of the Minister of Health on 20 August 2020 for:

- "1. If the government now considers mask use healthy and not a danger to the general population, please supply any evidence now held countering the above (and other) articles, and/or previous evidence consulted by Dr Bloomfield (prior to the Stuff article).*
- 2. Please provide evidence of all safety testing NZ has done (or relies on) related to the adequacy of O2 availability and the prevention CO2 concentration build up behind all the types of masks that are or might be recommended (or mandated) for the general public by government agencies during coronavirus outbreaks. This should include home-made cloth masks."*

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) constantly reviews international studies and evidence on mask wearing in the community setting. Our current advice aligns with that of the World Health Organization (WHO): [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak).

As part of reviewing international evidence, the Ministry considers other advice from international organisations including Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 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, we ensure it is applicable to the current New Zealand situation and can be applied in our context.

The WHO has published advice on the use of facemasks in the context of COVID-19. This includes an exploration of the risks associated with face mask use. This article can be found at the following address: [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak).

Your request for information regarding safety testing of face masks related to the adequacy of O2 availability and the prevention CO2 concentration build up is refused under section 18(g) of the Act. As the information you have requested, is not held by the Ministry and we do not believe this information is held by any other agency subject to the Act.

Under section 28(3) of the Act you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry's website.

Yours sincerely



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COVID-19 Health System Response Directorate