

Provision of face masks on inbound international flights

30 June 2020

This document provides guidance on the provision of face masks for inbound international passengers.

The Ministry of Health requests that medical grade masks (ie not cloth masks) are made available to all passengers on inbound international flights. Passengers should be strongly encouraged to use these masks as a precautionary measure while on board.

There are some passenger groups for whom wearing a mask is not recommended, such as those whose breathing or comfort would be impacted, or young children (under 6 years).

The Ministry of Health also requests that airlines consider providing passengers with masks in a package, which could also include hand sanitiser and a small pack of surface disinfectant wipes. The Ministry acknowledges that airlines need to seek approval from the regulator on whether the provision of hand sanitiser would be permissible as it is classified as a dangerous good.

The Ministry of Health acknowledges that it will take time to procure and distribute the set of packed items. As a result, we ask that in the short-term, airlines work to:

- Ensure an adequate number of masks are made available for passengers to use (minimum of masks in a pack, with the flight crew having the capacity to provide additional masks if required)
- Strongly encourage passengers to use these masks

Airlines can submit their procedures for face mask supply to the Ministry of Health for review and approval.

Mask use

There needs to be guidance on how to put on and take off a mask safely, as well as an announcement/demonstration as part of the safety briefing. Ideally, this guidance should be available to all passengers. Appendix 1 provides information on how to put on and take off a mask. It is particularly important to reinforce that hand hygiene needs to occur before putting on and after removing the mask.

Facilities for safe mask disposal must be provided.

Appendix 1: COVID-19: How to use a face mask safely

Some key points

- Never share face masks with other people.
- Face masks should not be worn by young children or anyone unable to remove them without assistance.
- Face masks should not be worn by people who have trouble breathing.

How to safely put on a face mask

1. Ensure your face mask is clean and dry and is not damaged.
2. Before putting on your face mask, clean your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser (containing at least 60 percent alcohol). Ensure your hands are dry.
3. Place the face mask over your nose and mouth and secure with ties or loops. Make sure the mask fits snugly, moulded to your face and around your nose. Make sure the mask fully covers your nose, mouth and chin. Your mask should be comfortable, with no gaps around the mask and your face, and allow you to breathe easily.
4. Clean your hands again (as above).

While wearing a face mask

1. Do not touch the front of the face mask. If you do, clean your hands and dry thoroughly.
2. Avoid touching your face, as infection can still be introduced by touching your eyes or if you are not wearing your face mask correctly.
3. Face masks should not be moved during use. This includes being pulled up or pulled down below your chin. If you need to remove your mask (for example, to eat) - remove it safely, dispose of it appropriately and clean your hands.
4. Replace the face mask every 4 hours or earlier if it becomes damp, damaged or soiled.

How to safely remove a face mask

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser (containing at least 60 percent alcohol). Ensure your hands are dry.
2. Remove the face mask from behind (do not touch the front of the mask) by untying ties or removing loops and pull it away from your face. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth when removing your mask.
3. Clean or dispose of it appropriately (see below).
4. Clean your hands again (as above).

Safely disposing of single-use face masks

1. Dispose in a closed lidded bin or place into a bag and seal before putting into a rubbish bin or taking home.
2. Clean your hands after disposing of the face mask with soap and water or use hand sanitiser (containing at least 60 percent alcohol). Ensure your hands are dry.
3. Do not re-use or try to disinfect single-use disposable face masks.