# Infection prevention and control advice in the community when COVID-19 infection is suspected

21 February 2020

Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Basic hygiene measures include:

* Hand hygiene – that is, washing hands regularly with soap and water, or cleansing with hand sanitiser1
* staying at home if you are sick
* coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene
* cleaning surfaces regularly.

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks can reduce the spread of infection when used correctly and in the appropriate context. This may be recommended in workplaces where people are more likely to come in contact with the disease.

## General population

For **most people** in the community, PPE such as face masks are not recommended. However, for people with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection, the WHO recommends that there may be benefit in wearing a face mask to reduce the spread of infection to other people.

## Workplaces

1. Workplaces where people can maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential COVID19 symptoms – Facemasks and gloves are not recommended.   
     
   Examples of these workplaces include – education facilities, pharmacies, retail outlets
2. People who, due to the nature of their job, may be unable to maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential COVID19 symptoms – facemasks and gloves are recommended when this contact is likely to occur.   
     
   Examples of these workplaces include – Police, prison staff, customs staff

These recommendations are a guide only and workplace settings not listed in the table should consider their ability to maintain the 1 metre rule and use the table to inform their use of PPE. In general, surgical/medical masks prevent the dispersal of droplets by an infected patient and the inhalation of droplets if within 1 metre of a coughing individual.

Hand hygiene and cough / sneeze etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues and wash hands) will have a bigger impact.

## How to correctly wear and remove a face mask2

If you are unwell or have a job which requires you to be in close contact with people who may have coronavirus, it is recommended you use a face mask. It is important that face masks are worn and removed correctly. Masks should fit snuggly and fully cover your nose and mouth.

How to wear a mask:

* wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser
* place over nose, mouth and chin
* fit flexible nose piece over nose bridge
* secure on head with ties or elastic
* adjust to fit – secure on your head, fitting snuggly around your face with no gaps
* avoid touching or adjusting your mask during use.

How to remove a mask:

* wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser
* avoid touching the front of the mask
* if the mask has ties, untie the bottom, then top tie
* remove from face
* discard, do not use again
* wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser immediately.