Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)
Community advice on when & how to use a face mask

WA Health does not recommend the use of facemasks for the general community (who have no symptoms of respiratory illness), to prevent the risk of contracting the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

How do you catch COVID-19?
It is likely COVID-19 is spread from person-to-person through:

- direct contact with a person while they are infectious
- contact with droplets when a person with the infection coughs or sneezes
- touching objects or surfaces that are contaminated by droplets or secretions from an infected person.

What is the best way to protect myself and others against COVID-19?
The best way to protect yourself and others is to practice good hygiene by:

- Washing your hands frequently (for at least 20 seconds) with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand gel. This will kill the virus if it is on your hands.
- Refraining from touching your mouth and nose.
- Covering your nose and mouth with a tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of the tissue immediately into a rubbish bin and clean your hands as described above. By doing this you are less likely to contaminate objects or people that you touch.
- Avoiding close contact (maintain a distance of at least 1 metre) with anyone if you or they have cold or flu-like symptoms.

When to use a mask
Surgical face masks are masks that are flat or pleated (some are like cups). They are attached to the head with straps. Surgical masks are not recommended for the general community to prevent the risk of contracting COVID-19. Healthy people, with no respiratory illness symptoms, only need to wear a mask if caring for a person with or suspected to have COVID-19.

If you have, or are suspected to have, COVID-19, you will need to wear a surgical mask if you cannot avoid being in close contact with others e.g. if you are on self-isolation and need to leave your home to see a GP for medical care.
Use of face masks

If you are required to wear a mask it is important to follow the steps below when both putting on the mask and when disposing of it:

- Place the mask carefully to cover your mouth and nose and tie it securely to minimise any gaps between the face and the mask
- While in use, avoid touching the front of the mask
- Remove the mask by using the ties or straps. Do not touch the front of the mask
- Discard single-use face masks in a lined rubbish bin immediately upon removal
- After removing your mask (or if you accidentally touch a used mask) make sure you clean your hands by using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- Replace your face mask with a new mask as soon as it becomes damp/humid. **Never re-use single-use masks.**

Cloth masks (e.g. cotton or gauze) are not recommended under any circumstance.

**Remember, masks are only effective when used in combination with frequent hand-cleaning with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.**

For further information see: