

Thursday 6 August 2020

MASKS SUPPORT THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

Masks are a helpful addition in the fight against COVID-19 if used correctly. NSW Health strongly encourages people to wear them when unable to physically distance, particularly in indoor settings, to keep everyone safe.

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said masks are recommended particularly in indoor settings such as on public transport, and in places where people congregate, such as entertainment venues and services at places of worship. They also offer protection if worn by staff in hospitality venues such as pubs, clubs and restaurants.

“By wearing a mask, you are protecting other people. If you are unknowingly infected, wearing a mask will reduce the chance that you pass the virus on to others,” Dr Chant said.

“Physical distancing is still one of the most important things you can do to protect yourself,” said Dr Chant. “Try to avoid crowds, but where physical distance cannot be maintained, wearing a mask is an important protective measure for other people, along with good hand hygiene. Always stay home if you are sick, and get tested early.”

When wearing a face mask, it is important to use it properly by:

- washing or sanitising your hands before putting it on or taking it off
- ensuring the mask covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly under your chin, over the bridge of your nose and against the sides of your face
- refraining from touching the front of your mask while wearing or removing it
- not allowing the mask to hang around your neck or under your nose
- not reusing single-use masks; wash and dry reusable masks after use and store in a clean, dry place.

The effectiveness of different types of cloth mask in blocking respiratory droplets varies, depending on the weave and the number of layers (at least 2–3 layers are needed). They are increasingly less effective as they become increasingly damp.

Masks should not be worn by young children or anyone who has trouble breathing or who is unable to remove the mask themselves without assistance.

This advice is for the community and industry. NSW Health has provided separate advice for health, aged care and disability settings.

NSW Health has a robust supply of masks for front line health care workers (over 88 million surgical masks in the current NSW Government stock). Community members can purchase disposable or reusable masks, or make cloth masks themselves.

“NSW Health continues to monitor the situation closely,” said Dr Chant.