

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT MASK DISTRIBUTION

Why is the Victorian Government distributing free reusable face masks?

This Victorian Government aims to protect those members of the community who may become sicker with coronavirus (COVID-19), or who may be less likely to have access to a face covering. Providing these people, and the workers that deliver services to them, with reusable face masks is important to minimising risk of infection across the community - and supporting vulnerable Victorians and our essential health workers.

What sort of masks are being distributed?

The reusable masks consist of three (3) layers of pressed cotton fabric with elastic ear loops. They are designed to be worn multiple times and can be washed between wearing. These masks are a practical alternative to surgical single use masks. The reusable masks are being developed by ethical manufacturers based in Victoria.

Who is determined to be a vulnerable Victorian?

Victorians who will be offered reusable face masks will include:

- people over the age of 12 years who are being actively managed for the following chronic conditions:
 - poor immunity
 - heart disease, diabetes and stroke
 - obesity
 - chronic lung disease
 - alcohol and drug dependency
 - frailty
- people living in public housing, in crisis accommodation, or who are homeless
- people living in rooming houses and supported residential services
- people living with disability
- people with other needs including alcohol and drug issues, including those attending primary and secondary needle and syringe programs
- people experiencing mental health
- people experiencing family violence
- young people in residential facilities, and those receiving other health and human services
- young people with health and/or social issues that make them vulnerable
- young people living in mandatory facilities
- Aboriginal people
- Refugee and asylum seekers (including temporary visa holders).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Do individuals need to prove their eligibility to receive a mask?

Service providers are expected to use their judgement in providing masks to vulnerable Victorians and assessing that they meet the criteria for eligibility. Service providers should confirm with individuals that they have not already accessed reusable masks from the program.

What about other people who do not meet the criteria?

People who are not eligible for these reusable masks can access face coverings including making their own cloth masks (<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/design-and-preparation-cloth-masks-covid-19-doc>), alternatives such as scarves or bandanas, or purchasing masks from retailers.

What efforts will be in place to ensure masks are distributed widely?

Supplies of masks will be provided to agencies across Victoria. To support fair distribution of masks to vulnerable Victorians, agencies should avoid providing duplicate masks to individuals by making some simple enquiries as to whether a client has already received a mask, before offering them one.

How many masks can be provided per person?

Each eligible person can be supplied with two reusable masks. If a person has received single-use masks, they are still able to receive two reusable masks at a later date. Having two reusable masks ensures they can be rotated and washed.

How long can a reusable mask be worn for?

A cloth mask should be washed each day after use. However, if during the day your mask is visibly dirty or wet, do not continue wearing it; the mask needs to be washed. If your mask becomes dirty or wet in the time that you are wearing it, you should change to a clean and dry mask.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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How long do reusable do masks last?

The following are signs that your cloth mask may no longer be offering you the same level of protection it once did:

- it does not fit snugly on your face (for example, you can feel your breath coming out of the sides of the mask)
- it keeps falling off or sliding down
- there are holes in it
- you need to keep adjusting it
- the material has started to wear thin or fray.

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the Department of Health and Human Services, Coronavirus website pages listed below:

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/reusable-face-masks-covid-19#ordering-reusable-face-masks--information-for-service-providers>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/face-masks-and-coverings-covid-19>

<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/translated-resources-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

