

Guidance for Shops and the Public on the new law requiring the wearing of a face covering

In England you are now required to wear a face covering when you go into shops, including food shops, supermarkets and some other settings. They must also be worn when buying takeaway food and drink, although they can be removed in a seating area. Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer and are instead intended to protect others by helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

When do the rules require a face covering?

In England, the law requires you to wear a face covering in the following settings:

- **public transport** (Taxis are not public transport, but some taxis may ask you to wear a face covering)
- **indoor transport hubs** (airports, rail and tram stations and terminals, maritime ports and terminals, bus and coach stations and terminals)
- **shops and supermarkets** (places which are open to the public and that wholly or mainly offer goods or services for retail sale or hire)
- **indoor shopping centres**
- **banks, building societies, and post offices** (including credit unions, short-term loan providers, savings clubs and money service businesses)

If necessary, the police have the powers to enforce these measures, including issuing a fine of up to £100.

Do I need to wear face coverings in other settings?

Face coverings are also needed in NHS settings, including hospitals and primary or community care settings, such as GP surgeries. They are advised to be worn in care homes.

You are also strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in other enclosed public spaces where social distancing may be difficult and where you may have contact with people you do not normally meet.

Is everyone required to wear a face covering?

There are some people who are exempt from wearing face coverings, these are:

- children under the age of 11
- people who are not able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress
- if you are travelling with or aiding someone who relies on lip reading to communicate
- to avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others
- to avoid injury, or to escape a risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you
- to eat or drink but only if reasonably necessary (this should be in an eating and drinking area)
- to take medication

Workers in shops are not required by law to wear a face covering but there may be circumstances where employers consider their use is necessary to help protect staff and customers.

Exemption Cards

Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they do not have to wear a face covering. This could be in the form of an exemption card, badge or even a home-made sign. This is a personal choice and is not required by law.

Template exemption cards/signs can be downloaded from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

Advice to businesses about people not wearing a face covering

Please be aware that some people may have a hidden disability which makes it difficult for them to wear a face cover and that their hidden disability could include problems with communication. If you are unsure, ask the person or check to see if they have an exemption card, badge or sign.

If someone without an exemption refuses to wear a face covering, a business can refuse them entry and can call the police if they refuse to comply.

Are there occasions when it is permitted to remove a face covering?

You are permitted to remove a face covering:

- if asked to do so in a bank, building society, or post office for identification
- if asked to do so by shop staff for the purpose of age identification.
- if speaking with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound. Some may ask you, either verbally or in writing, to remove a covering to help with communication.
- if a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering

Guidance on wearing a face covering

To be effective a face covering needs to cover **the nose and mouth**. You can buy reusable or single-use face coverings, make your own, use a scarf, bandana or religious garment.

Make sure your face covering securely fits round the side of the face.

Guidance on face coverings and how to make your own

For guidance on how to make your own face covering go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>