

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: WEARING A MASK AS ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE



LE GOUVERNEMENT
DU GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG

The government's strategy

Given the pathogenic and virulent nature of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the evolution of the COVID-19 epidemic, the government decided, on 15 March 2020, to put in place restrictions on the movement of the population in order to reduce the spread of the virus, protect people at risk and preserve the capacity of our health care system. Strict compliance with sanitary precautionary measures has been emphasized as an essential corollary to these measures.

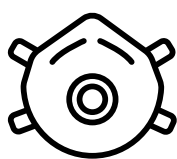
The Health Directorate has complemented these measures with a strategy for the management and use of masks from the national supply. Such a strategy was indeed necessary in the context of a limited national reserve and the absence of vaccine and treatment against COVID-19.

In line with the recommendations of the health authorities, the strategy aims first and foremost to protect the doctors and carers who are on the front line in our fight against the virus. The targeted populations and the instructions for use will be gradually adapted into account the evolution of the epidemiological situation and the available resources.

It is apparent from the epidemiological curve of COVID-19 for Luxembourg that the confinement policy decided by the government is beginning to show its first effects.

Nevertheless, the number of new infections remains high and vigilance of the entire population is therefore required. In the absence of a vaccine or treatment against COVID-19, adherence to sanitary precautionary measures is more important than ever, especially since delays in the supply of surgical masks and FFP2 respiratory masks are likely to continue for several more weeks.

In a statement dated 1 April 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) paved the way for increased use of masks, including hand-made masks, by the general public in order to limit the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.



"We must preserve medical and surgical respiratory masks for frontline staff only. But the idea of using respiratory coverings or mouth covering to prevent coughing and wheezing from projecting the disease into the environment and towards others (...) that in itself is not a bad." said Dr. Mike Ryan, a WHO emergency expert, at a [press conference](#).

In a [guidance document](#) published on 6 April 2020, WHO provides advice on the use of masks, including by healthy people.

In addition, the ECDC has produced a [document](#) aimed at providing guidance on the wearing of alternative masks, as an option in case of a shortage of specialized masks.

What are “alternative” masks?



So-called “alternative” or “non-medical” masks can be homemade fabric masks or a simple cloth covering the mouth and nose. This type of mask helps hold back the droplets that are spread when by talking, sneezing or coughing.

“Alternative” masks are to be distinguished from so-called surgical masks and respiratory masks “FFP2”, which are primarily reserved for physicians and caregivers.



Surgical masks are fluid resistant and are worn in case of a possible exposure to droplets or secretions, including during surgery.

They do not protect against infection with the SARS-CoV-2 virus, but they do protect others when the person wearing the mask is infected, even if they do not show symptoms. These masks should also be worn by people who are in contact with vulnerable people to protect them.

The mask is a medical device covered by Directive 93/42/EEC on medical devices. Its conformity with the provisions of the Directive is attested by the CE marking on the packaging, which guarantees quality and safety.



Respiratory masks known as “FFP2” are worn in case of protection in a context of aerial transmission. They protect the caregiver more effectively in the event of aerosol production by an infected patient during intubation procedures, naso- or oropharyngeal smears, respiratory physiotherapy, dental care, opening of the ventilation circuit, endotracheal suctioning, etc.

They are regulated by the European Directive 89/686/EEC on personal protective equipment and must comply with standards (K)N95, EN 149, type FFP2 or FFP3, which guarantee quality and safety.

Who can use the alternative masks?

This mask is not suitable for doctors and caregivers, but for the general public in certain situations, such as:

- when you're feeling sick;
- when one wishes to contribute to the common effort to contain the virus;
- in public places where social distancing is difficult to maintain.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is capable of being transmitted even in the absence of symptoms. It is therefore advisable to cover your mouth and nose with a mask or even another piece of cloth, especially in public places where keeping interpersonal distance is difficult to maintain.

However, beware of a false sense of security, as there is no scientific proof that this mask protects against respiratory viruses.

Wearing masks made of fabric that do not comply with the applicable standards can therefore be justified in the event of a tense supply situation and provided that the mask in question is used as a complement to other precautionary measures. It can thus help to prevent transmission of the virus by people who are unknowingly carriers of the virus and help to slow the spread of the virus.



Wash your hands with soap and water.



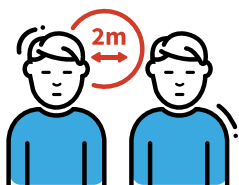
Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into the crease of the elbow.



Avoid shaking hands or kissing.



Avoid touching your face with your hands.



Keep a distance of 2 meters.



If possible, stay home!

Instructions for use

The following rules must be followed when wearing an alternative mask:



- Position the mask so that it covers the mouth and nose.
Attach it carefully to limit the appearance of gaps between the face and the mask.
- Avoid touching your mask while wearing it.
- When removing the mask, do not touch the front part, but undo it from the back.
- After touching or removing the mask, wash your hands thoroughly.
- Wash your mask every day and at a minimum temperature of 60°.

Caution: The mask does not replace other sanitary precautionary measures, whose strict application remains the most effective measure to stop the spread of the virus.

How do I make my mask?

A [tutorial](#) for making masks has been worked out to support the #BitzDoheem project, which is organised by the FNEL and the “Lëtzebuerger Guiden a Scouten”, with logistical support from the POST and for which volunteers can register via [GovJobs](#).