Protocols for Safe Face Mask Use

The protocols for safe face mask use provide information how to put a face mask on, what to do while wearing it, how to take it off and, how to handle it safely after use to avoid the risk of infection. Some key points to note are:

1. Never share face masks with other people.
2. Face masks should not be worn by young children or anyone unable to remove them without assistance.
3. Face masks should not be worn by people who have trouble breathing.

Staff, students and members of the University community must stay up to date with the University’s COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans for Alert Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. These documents will clarify when face masks must be used.

How to safely put on a face mask

1. Ensure your mask is dry and not damaged.
2. Before putting on your face mask clean your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser. Ensure your hands are dry.
3. Place the face mask over your nose and mouth and secure the ties or loops. Make sure the mask fits snugly, moulded to your face and around your nose. Make sure the mask fully covers your nose, mouth and chin. Your mask should be comfortable, with no gaps around the mask and your face, and allow you to breathe easily.
4. Clean your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser.

While wearing a mask

1. Do not touch the front of the face mask. If you do, clean your hands and dry them thoroughly.
2. Avoid touching your face, as infection can still be introduced by touching your eyes or if you are not wearing your face mask correctly.
3. Face masks should not be moved during use. This includes being pulled down below your chin. If you need to remove your mask (for example to eat) – remove it, following the protocol below and clean your hands.
4. Replace the face mask if it becomes damp, damaged or soiled. (Note: single use masks can typically be used for 1-3 hours).

How to safely remove a face mask

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser.
2. Remove the face mask from behind (do not touch the front) by untying ties or removing loops and pull it away from your face. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
3. Clean or dispose of your mask appropriately:
   a. Clean cloth face coverings by washing them in a washing machine with detergent at 60°C. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser. Ensure your hands are dry. Dry the face covering completely before you use it again. Do not use a damp face covering. Use separate bags and containers for storing and transporting clean and used face masks.
   b. Dispose of single-use face coverings. Put it in a rubbish bin with a closed lid, or in a sealed bag before putting into a rubbish bin. Do not re-use or try to disinfect single-use face coverings. Clean your hands after disposing of the face mask with soap and water or use hand sanitiser. Ensure your hands are dry.