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Press release

3 layer face coverings recommended, but not mandatory, in certain situations in Wales

The Welsh Government is following updated advice from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and recommending people in Wales wear 3 layer face coverings in situations where social distancing is not possible.

First published:

9 June 2020

Last updated:

9 June 2020

This was published under the 2016 to 2021 administration of the Welsh Government

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The evidence remains clear that maintaining a 2 metre distance and good hand hygiene is the most effective way to protect yourself and others from contracting coronavirus, but the updated guidance from the WHO says 3 layer face coverings could help provide some control of the virus in specific circumstances.

This updated advice only applies to people who are not showing symptoms of coronavirus. People who are symptomatic must self-isolate for 7 days and get a test, as set out in existing guidance. Unless the test shows a negative result, they must not go out during this time, even with a face covering or mask.

Health Minister Vaughan Gething said:

Washing your hands, avoiding touching your face and maintaining a 2 metre distance from others remain the best way of stopping the spread of the virus.

“On Friday, the WHO updated their guidance on face coverings, advising that they should be considered in settings where maintaining social distancing is difficult. However, to be crystal clear, wearing a face covering does not replace the need for social distancing or washing your hands regularly.

“Further scientific evidence is needed on the benefits to the wider public of wearing face coverings, but observational findings so far suggest that homemade or purchased 3 layer face-coverings might reduce transmission from one person to another if made, worn, handled and disposed of properly.

“Therefore, on balance, we are recommending to the people of Wales that 3 layer face-coverings should be used in situations where social distancing measures can be more difficult to achieve, for example, on public transport. We are not recommending their use outdoors.

“The wearing of face coverings will not be mandatory, but we will encourage people to do this for the benefit of themselves and others.

The minister stressed that this advice only applies to people who are not showing symptoms of coronavirus, adding:

Anyone who has a high temperature, a new, continuous cough or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste must self-isolate for a minimum of 7 days and get a test as quickly as possible. Unless the test shows a negative result, people must not go out during this time, even with a face covering or mask.

First published

9 June 2020

Last updated

9 June 2020

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