



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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INTERNAL MEMO

Date:	09 December 2020		
To:	The Honorable Dr ZL Mkhize, Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on Covid-19

MASK EXEMPTIONS/USE OF VENTED MASKS

Problem/Concern

- When can use of masks in public areas be exempted?
- Can vented masks be used?

Evidence review

- In certain circumstances the use of a mask may not be required.
- The MAC on Covid-19 previously provided advice on mask use for children, see MAC advisory.¹
- Mask use during vigorous exercise may reduce the ability to breath comfortably, and thus generally recommended as exempted in this setting.
- Where there is a dependence on lip-reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate, masks will inhibit this communication.
- Those with respiratory conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Asthma, mask wearing will cause increased CO₂ concentrations, and visors should be used by these individuals.
- Mask use (or appropriate masks use) may not be possible in those with certain mental and physical disability.

Recommendations

The following mask exemptions are recommended:

1. Children under 5 years (see MAC advisory: Masks for Children of School going age);
2. During vigorous exercise;
3. Those speaking or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading;
4. Respiratory conditions such as Asthma and COPD;
5. In cases of mental or physical disability;
6. When eating or drinking.

¹ MAC Advisory: Mask use for Children of School going age. 10 September 2020.
<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/2020/09/10/masks-for-children-of-school-going-age/>

Where masks can not be used, i.e. for people with respiratory conditions, visors are recommended for public places. It is important to ensure that all other non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) such as social distancing, hand-washing, and ensuring ventilation are adhered to.

Vented masks should not be used. If an infected person breathes into a vented mask, the virus may be released in large numbers into the air through the vent and thereby increase the risk of infection. Hence, vented masks are NOT recommended. Note: Vented masks that contain the appropriate filters (that are changed regularly) may be used.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Kind regards,



PROFESSOR SALIM S. ABDOOL KARIM

PROF MARIAN JACOBS

CO-CHAIRPERSONS: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 09 December 2020

CC:

- » **Dr S Buthelezi (Director-General: Health)**
- » **Dr T Pillay (Deputy Director-General)**
- » **Incident Management Team**