



Keeping everyone safe:
The rules about face coverings in Northern Ireland



The rules about face coverings are different for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.



This easy read guide is about the rules in Northern Ireland.



There are new laws about wearing face coverings in Northern Ireland.



You have to wear a face covering in all indoor places open to the public across Northern Ireland.

This includes:



- public transport like buses, trains and taxis



- shops, supermarkets and shopping centres



- dry cleaners



- betting shops



- restaurants and cafes



- libraries and town halls



- museums and cinemas



- places of worship



- takeaways or carry outs



- hospitals - as a visitor or going to an appointment



- GP surgeries



- visiting a care home



If you are not sure if the place you want to go has rules about face coverings, you can ask the staff at the door.



Who does not have to wear a face covering?



If you have a very good reason not to wear a face covering, you do not have to.



Reasons not to wear a face covering include:



Your disability makes it very hard to put the face covering on, or take it off.



Your disability stops you being able to wear the face covering.



Wearing a face covering makes breathing problems worse or makes you feel very unwell.



Wearing a face covering makes you feel very worried or upset.



The person you are with needs to lip read.



You need to escape from harm or danger.



You can take off your face covering for reasons including:



You need to take medicine.



You need to eat or drink (you must put your face covering back on again afterwards).



You need to get away from harm or danger.



You must also take off your face covering if people who work in a place, or the police, ask you to.



If wearing the face covering makes you feel unwell, or you are finding it hard to breathe, it is ok to take it off.



If you do not feel better soon, ask for help.



If you are on public transport, you may want to get off for a bit and take a break.



If you find that wearing a face covering always makes you feel unwell or makes it hard to breathe, you do not have to wear a face covering in future.



What could happen if I do not wear a face covering?



If someone else is not wearing a face covering, it is not ok for you, or another member of the public, to ask them why.



You should not be stopped from going in because you are not wearing a face covering.



But staff might ask you why you are not wearing a face covering.



They could also call the police if they think you should be wearing a face covering.



The police can make you leave if you do not have a good reason for not wearing a face covering.



The police can also make you pay a **fine**.



A **fine** is when you have to pay money because you have done something wrong.



It may help you feel safer to have a card with you to help you explain why you are not wearing a face covering.



There is a [card you can print off](#) and use, [here](#).



There is no law about having to use a card to explain.



You do not have to use the card if you do not want to.



No one should be mean to you for not wearing a face covering .



If you have any problems you can:



- Speak to someone you trust



- Make a complaint



- Ask for help from the police



- Call the Mencap Learning Disability Helpline



Do children have to wear a face covering?



Babies and small children who are 3 years old or younger, **should not** wear a face covering.



This is because it might be dangerous for them.



Children who are 13 years old or younger do not have to wear a face covering, but they can if they want to.

