



## Face covering rules



### What is a face covering?

A face covering goes over your nose and mouth.



You might call it a face mask.



### The law

England, Wales and Northern Ireland all have different laws about face coverings.



This easy read guide is about the law in England.



In England, you now have to wear a face covering on public transport.



Public transport includes buses, trains, tubes, trams and taxis.



You also have to wear a face covering when you go into a shop.



Other places which are indoors might ask you to wear a face covering if you can.



These other places might include cinemas, theatres, libraries and places of worship.

## **Pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants**



The law says that you do not have to wear a face covering in pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants.

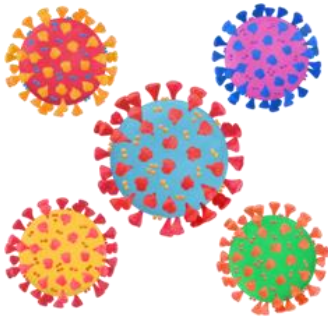


Some pubs, bars, cafes and restaurants might ask you to wear a face covering when you are walking around, or going to the toilet.

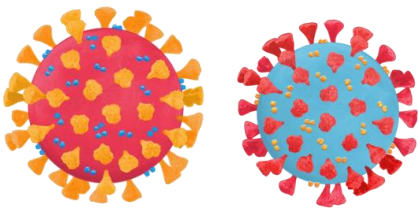


## **Why has the law changed?**

The law has changed because a lot of people have coronavirus.



There are different **variants** of coronavirus.



A **variant** means something that is almost the same, but it is a bit different.



Scientists have found a new variant of coronavirus.



They have called the new variant **Omicron**.

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**Omicron** is the name of a letter in the Greek alphabet.



The Omicron variant of coronavirus has been found in the UK.



The government thinks that if people wear face coverings in some places where they are indoors and close to other people, it will help to slow down the spread of all the variants of coronavirus.



The government has said it will look at the face covering laws again on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December.

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



If you are in a shop or on public transport, a member of 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.

## What should I do if I can not wear a face covering?



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



This is called being **exempt** from wearing a face covering.



**Exempt** means that you do not have to do something that other people do.



You might want 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 or download to your phone on the [government's website](#).



There is no law about having to use a card to explain why you are not wearing a face covering.



You do not have to use a 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 on 0808 808 1111