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.

It is now the law in England that most people must wear a face covering when they go to many places.

All of these places are indoors.

Places where it is the law to wear a face covering include:
• Shops, supermarkets and shopping centres

• The library or town hall

• A museum or cinema

• Places of worship

• Public transport, like buses, trains, tubes, trams, taxis and stations.
- Aeroplanes and airports

- Hospitals – as a visitor or going to an appointment

- The GP surgery

- Visiting a care home

A list of places where you must wear a face covering are on this page of the government’s website.
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.

**Places you do not need to wear a face covering**

The law says that you do not have to wear a face covering in places where you are eating and drinking.

This includes 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.
You do not need to wear a face covering in places where you are doing exercise or dancing.

This includes leisure centres, gyms and night clubs.

You do not need to wear a face covering if you are singing as part of a singing group or during a service.

When is it a good idea to wear a face covering?

The government says it is a good idea to wear a face covering when you are indoors and close to lots of people you do not usually spend time with.
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**.

**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 the rules will stay in place until Wednesday 26th January.

Source: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
The government has said it will look at the face covering rules again on Wednesday 5th January.

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

If you are not wearing a face covering in a place where it is the law to wear one, 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.

A list of reasons why you might be exempt from wearing a face covering are on this page of the government’s website.

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

Source: www.gov.uk/coronavirus  Updated 13/12/2021
• Make a complaint

• Ask for help from the police

• Call the Mencap Learning Disability Helpline on 0808 808 1111

Thank you to Photosymbols for helping us make this easy read.