

Use of mouth masks in the workplace: overview of the different masks

Wearing mouth masks will become part of the exit strategy. It is important that we use masks, but even more important that we respect the hierarchy of prevention measures. What exactly does this mean?

Hierarchy of prevention measures






In order to limit the spread of the coronavirus, many measures are imposed. These measures have a hierarchy. This means that everyone must always try to respect the first measure. If this is not possible, the following measures shall take effect. Wearing a mouth mask comes last. A mouth mask is recommended only when the primary measures cannot be respected. A mouth mask is only mandatory on public transport.

Preventive measures according to hierarchy

1. Stay home, especially if you're sick.
2. Work from home as often as possible if the jobs allow for this.
3. Maintain a distance of at least 1.5 metres from each other, indoors and outside.
4. Wash your hands often with soap and water.
5. Wear [a mouth mask](#) on public transport and when social distancing cannot be guaranteed.
6. Limit your physical social contacts.

The employer decides what measures it can take and whether it provides mouth masks for its employees.

Overview of the different types of mouth masks

					
	Surgical mask	FFP2/FFP3 without valve	FFP2/FFP3 with valve	Fabric mask	Scarf
Protects yourself	Sufficient**	Yes	Yes	Sufficient*	Sufficient*
Protects others	Yes	Yes	No	Sufficient*	Sufficient*
For use in hospitals	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

*for all activities with the exception of activities in the healthcare sector

** for all activities with the exception of activities in the healthcare sector that specifically work with COVID patients

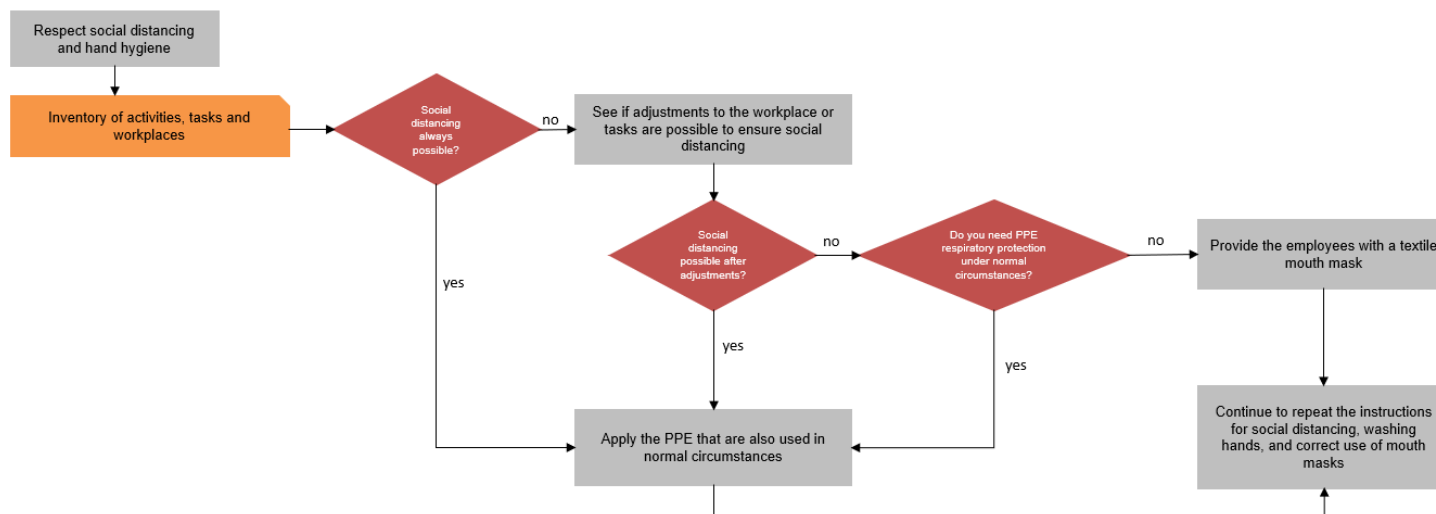
How are textile masks cleaned?

Preferably, the employees clean their own reusable mask (collective cleaning at the company is not recommended):

- Sterilise the mask by washing it at 60°C. As long as the water is 60°C or hotter, the mouth masks are sufficiently disinfected, so boiling in a pot of water with detergent (soap or washing powder) is a good solution. Or in the washing machine. It is advisable to use a delicates washing bag so that all the ribbons don't get tangled up.
- Dry the masks on a disinfected drying rack. Wash your hands with soap and water.
- Iron them at a hot temperature and – when completely dry and cooled – store them safely in a paper envelope or Ziplock bag.
- Then store it in a sterile location if you don't use it immediately.

Source: maakjemondmasker.be

Convenient decision tree: choice of mouth masks for organisations outside the healthcare sector



Also consult our other useful documents related to mouth masks:

- An infographic on the correct way to wear mouth masks
- A technical sheet with the different types of mouth masks
- Our video on how to wear a [surgical mask](#) and [FFP2/FFP3 mask](#) correctly

This document was prepared on 28 April 2020 on the basis of the measures in force on that date.