

# Guidelines for use of face masks

## Community information

### OFFICIAL

This information has been developed by the Department of Health to provide advice on the use of P2 and N95 face masks in fire affected areas.

## Are all face masks the same?

No. Ordinary paper dust masks, surgical masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas do not protect you from fine particles in the air. P2 and N95 masks both help reduce inhalation of these particles

## Will a P2 or N95 mask provide total protection?

No. P2 and N95 masks don't provide complete protection. They do not remove or protect against carbon monoxide.

## What are the benefits of wearing a P2 or N95 mask?

Fitted properly, a P2 or N95 mask can filter out some of the fine particles in the air. Make sure the mask is fitted properly and a good seal has been achieved.

The mask should be sealed over the bridge of the nose and mouth, and there should be no gaps between the mask and face.

Men should be clean shaven to get a good seal. See page 2 for a fit guide.

## How long can I wear the mask?

The mask should be disposed of after four hours of continuous wear or when it becomes moist.

Masks should be replaced after each use.

For high particle exposures, the mask will load up with particles and become harder to breathe through. If you notice this restriction, change the mask.

If the filter is damaged in any way, e.g. the straps are broken, you need to replace it



P2 non-ventilated mask

## Are there any problems with P2 or N95 masks?

P2 and N95 masks can be very hot and uncomfortable and can make it harder for you to breathe normally. If the mask isn't fitted properly or becomes loaded up with dust particles from extended use, it will be less effective

## Is there anyone who shouldn't wear a P2 or N95 mask?

Anyone with a pre-existing heart or lung condition should try to seek medical advice before using a face mask.

These masks are not designed for children

## What else can I do to protect my family from the smoke and ash?

- Avoid all outdoor physical activity.
- Anyone with a heart or lung condition should take their medication as prescribed by their doctor.
- People with asthma should follow their asthma management plan.
- Switch air-conditioners to recirculate. If they do not have that function, turn them off. Try to take an air-conditioned break elsewhere if it is safe to do so and your home is uncomfortable.

- Reduce activities that affect indoor air quality, like smoking cigarettes, burning candles or vacuuming

## Where can I get more information?

- Visit [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) for updates on air quality information and what actions you need to take. Air quality information is also available at the EPA AirWatch website [www.epa.vic.gov.au/EPAirWatch](http://www.epa.vic.gov.au/EPAirWatch).
- Call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 for updated incident information as well as access to support services.
- Keep up to date with community newsletters produced by the local Incident Control Centre, which are available at [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) or at local relief centres.
- Check the EPA website for general information on Smoke and Your Health at [Smoke and your health | Environment Protection Authority Victoria <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/air-quality/smoke/smoke-your-health>](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/environmental-information/air-quality/smoke/smoke-your-health)

## How to put on and fit check a P2 mask



1  
Separate the edges of the mask to fully open it



2  
Bend the nose wire to form a gentle curve. The nose wire represents the top of the mask



3  
Hold the mask upside down to expose the two straps



4  
Using your index fingers and thumbs, separate the two straps



5  
While holding the straps, cup the mask under your chin



6  
Pull the straps up and over your head



7  
Place and position the lower strap at the base of your neck (under your ears)



8  
Place the upper strap on the crown of your head so that it runs just above the top of your ears



9  
Gently press the nose wire down across the bridge of your nose until it fits snugly



10  
Continue to adjust the mask and edges until you feel you have achieved a good and comfortable fit

### FIT CHECK

Gently inhale. When you breathe in the mask should draw in slightly toward the face and collapse



11

A 'fit check' must be performed each time a P2 or N95 mask is worn



12

Gently exhale. The mask should fill up with air. It is important at this stage that there is no air leakage around edges of mask.

Follow these directions each time the mask is worn. The masks will not provide the intended level of protection unless worn correctly so it is important that you achieve a good fit as detailed above. Men who are clean shaven will achieve the best facial seal. The brand of P2 or N95 masks may vary slightly so always follow the manufacturer's instructions and warnings.

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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