

USE OF FACE MASKS

A review of international approaches

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What approaches have other countries taken to introducing mask use?

Country Findings: Highlights

Whilst recommendations for mask use - and the stage at which they were introduced - vary from country to country, the general approach appears to be when mask use in public is promoted, a variety of materials are encouraged. The advantage of makeshift facial coverings encourage the general population to use some form of readily-available protection, which can also reduce the potential of limited medical mask supply becoming unavailable for the healthcare professionals that need it most. Moreover, there are concerns of non-symptomatic carriers further spreading the disease in public if they have no facial protection; this particular concern prompted Germany to update its mask recommendations.^{i ii}

In the case of the Czech Republic, the national government endorsed a social media campaign that led to the rapid uptake of mask use outdoors as many locals made their own home-sewn masks themselves.ⁱⁱⁱ On the other hand, disposable surgical mask use in South Korea is widespread and the government regulate the supply of masks to all citizens, who have an allocated number they can purchase every week. Furthermore, mask availability is made transparent as surveillance allows residents to see which nearby pharmacies have stock available.^{iv} Other countries in East Asia have taken similar steps, such as Taiwan, who have had a mask-rationing system in place since early February.^v Common societal practices in the region indicate that medical masks were more readily available initially, but the global supply shortage has led to the need for rationing.

However, within larger countries such as China and the U.S.A., regional variability of approaches to mask use is observed. Finally, given that mask usage is one of multiple measures taken by governments, its impact may be shrouded by other interventions such as social distancing and handwashing.

Country	At what point in the spread of disease were masks introduced?	What form of mask is used?	Who is required to wear a mask? In what circumstances?	How is this enforced?
Germany	<p>31st March 2020: Mask use introduced in city of Jena, 2 weeks after school closures and ban of public gatherings.^{vi}</p> <p>15th April 2020: Announcement from Chancellor Merkel that mask-wearing should extend nationwide, following concern of spread via potential asymptomatic carriers.^{vii} Germany's first reported case was on 27th January and it is beginning to relax current lockdown measures.^{viii}</p>	General public encouraged to use home-sewn masks or wear protective cloth, rather than medical masks to prevent shortage of supply for medical professionals and essential workers. ^{ix}	For those going outside into public spaces i.e. shoppers, those using public transport. ^x	Certain cities such as Jena have made mask use mandatory, whereas nation-wide these measures are rather recommended. ^{xi xii}
Czech Republic	19th March 2020: 18 days after the first confirmed case. ^{xiii} This occurred at the same time commuting became restricted to essential grocery shopping. ^{xiv}	If surgical masks are unavailable for public use, any form of cotton material such as folded bandanas and scarves. ^{xv xvi}	Anyone moving outside their home for any reason. ^{xvii}	Initially encouraged through a social media campaign that promoted mask use. ^{xviii} Now compulsory by law. ^{xix} Fines for non-compliance. ^{xx}
South Korea	<p>Mid-January 2020: Mask use, particularly for healthcare professionals and those showing respiratory symptoms already in place due to societal practices.^{xxi}</p> <p>9th March 2020: Mask distribution policy introduced. This is a 5-day rotation system that restricts the number of masks someone can buy, to ensure more equitable distribution and to minimise price-hiking from panic buying. Government bought masks from manufacturers to then distribute to the public to control</p>	<p>General population advised to wear KF80 (i.e. FFP1)-type masks. Those required to wear more protective masks (i.e. KF94):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those showing respiratory symptoms (coughing, sneezing, runny/blocked nose, sore throat, producing sputum). 2. Those taking care of COVID-19 patients. 3. People who visit hospitals or clinics. 	Everyone in public, especially showing respiratory symptoms. Those in their personal space (e.g. indoors) and non-crowded areas do not need to wear masks. ^{xxvii}	Regulated and monitored via social security number. Members of the public can go to a pharmacy on an assigned day of the week, allocated by birth year, and can buy only 2 masks per week. ID required to track purchases to prevent multiple purchases from different pharmacies. Mask availability for every pharmacy

	supply. ^{xxii xxiii} South Korea's first reported case was announced on 20 th January and infection control seems to be stable. ^{xxiv xxv}	4. Those working in areas which require them to contact many people (e.g. bus drivers, salesperson, postman, janitor etc.). ^{xxvi}		can be found via a mobile app. ^{xxviii}
China	<p>December 2019: Mask use, particularly for healthcare professionals and those showing respiratory symptoms already in place due to societal practices.^{xxix}</p> <p>26th January 2020: China's State Council approved subsidies worth USD \$1.63bn for COVID19 efforts to procure more masks. By 27th January, there were nearly 4,500 confirmed cases and 106 deaths.^{xxx} The first reported case was in December 2019, whilst the lockdown in Wuhan occurred on 23rd January 2020.</p> <p>19th March 2020: national guidelines introduced for the general population.^{xxxii}</p>	<p>Surgical or disposable masks for those at moderate risk of infection:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those working in crowded areas (e.g. hospitals, train stations). 2. Those in contact with someone in quarantine. 3. Those likely to come into contact with COVID19-infected people (e.g. police). <p>Low-risk people should wear disposable masks e.g. those visiting hospitals.^{xxxiii} A mask should not be used for more than 8 hours in total.^{xxxiii}</p>	Those in public areas likely come across other members of the public. ^{xxxiv}	Some provincial differences in enforcement/penalties but it is generally mandatory. ^{xxxv}
U.S.A.: State of New York	<p>15th April 2020: Governor Cuomo of New York in the process of issuing an executive order to make face coverings obligatory for residents, to take effect on 17th April.^{xxxvi} The state's first confirmed case was reported on 1st March; schools and non-business were closed as restrictive measures were put in place from 15th March.^{xxxvii} The spread of infection is showing very early signs of potentially stagnating but this remains to be seen. New York, New Jersey and Maryland are so far the only states to have issued broad orders mandating face coverings in most public settings in the US.^{xxxviii}</p>	Any form of face covering that masks the mouth and nose; examples include protective masks, scarves and bandanas. ^{xxxix}	Anyone not able to maintain social distancing measures in public and/or crowded areas e.g. on public transport, sidewalks and shops. This is in line with non-binding guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. ^{xl}	Cuomo stated that these rules enforced by local governments but no one would be forcibly removed from public transport for non-compliance. Consideration of issuing civil, not criminal, penalties. ^{xli}

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