



# FAQ on the new coronavirus

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## **Nationwide requirement to wear a mask in publicly accessible indoor spaces, rules on private events and recommendation to work from home**

In its extraordinary meeting on 18 October 2020, the Swiss Federal Council resolved measures to curb the further spread of the coronavirus. It did so in consultation with the cantons. Given the growing number of new infections, from 19 October 2020 it will be compulsory to wear a mask in all publicly accessible indoor spaces and at all public transport access points across Switzerland; this includes, for example, restaurants, shops and theatres and railway stations, airports, bus and tram stops. Already since 6 July a mask-wearing requirement has applied to all public transport.

In addition, from 19 October 2020 spontaneous gatherings of more than 15 people in public areas are not permitted. There is a mask-wearing requirement at all private events with more than 15 people. People may only consume food and drink sitting down, and the contact details of all those taking part must be recorded.

In addition, in all restaurants and places of entertainment food and drink may only be consumed sitting down. In addition, as in March 2020 the federal government is again recommending people to work from home.

[Compulsory wearing of masks nationwide in publicly accessible indoor spaces, including all public transport access points \(railway stations, airports, bus and tram stops, etc.\).](#)

### **1. Why does the mask-wearing requirement now also apply to indoor spaces?**

Studies show that the risk of the virus being transmitted, particularly in places where it is not possible to keep the requisite distance, can be reduced if people systematically wear face masks. Face masks are defined as respirator masks and hygiene masks, as well as textile masks offering sufficient protection.

### **2. What spaces does the mask-wearing requirement apply to?**

“Indoor spaces” are shops, shopping centres, entertainment and leisure establishments such as museums, libraries, cinemas, theatres and concert venues, restaurants, bars and clubs,

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discos and dance venues, service establishments such as post offices and travel agents, public transport access points (railway stations, airports, bus and tram stops), hotels and lodging establishments, healthcare facilities such as medical practices and hospitals, churches and religious sites visited either as tourist attractions or for a religious event.

It is also compulsory to wear a mask in sections of public administration premises that are accessible to the public, in particular areas with a service counter. Masks must likewise be worn in the generally accessible area of administrative buildings where people are received by appointment (for example social services and courts).

Finally, the mask-wearing requirement also applies to indoor spaces where parliaments and councils meet if these indoor spaces are also accessible to visitors.

In the following publicly accessible indoor spaces, the mask-wearing requirement applies only if the precautionary measures of the establishment in question require it: child daycare centres, compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and tertiary education establishments (such as universities), classrooms in other educational establishments where wearing a mask makes teaching difficult because of the type of activity, and training areas at sports facilities and fitness centres.

The FOPH recommends the wearing of a mask in offices and workplaces where it is not possible for people to keep their distance.

### **3. Are there still exceptions for children and other people?**

Children below the age of 12 are exempted, as are people who can prove that they cannot wear a face mask for a specific reason, in particular on medical grounds.

There is also an exception for people such as artists, speakers and sportspeople who perform or appear in front of people, as long as they are actually performing or appearing and it is not possible for them to wear a mask. As soon as the performance or appearance is over they must also wear a mask.

Another exception is guests in restaurants, bars and clubs, discos and dance venues who are sitting at a table and consuming food or drinks. However, they must wear a face mask while on their way to their table or going to the toilet. Masks must also be worn while dancing and playing games (such as pool or darts).

### **4. What is the rule for people working in places of this sort?**

The compulsory wearing of masks in publicly accessible indoor spaces also applies to the staff working there if there are no special precautionary measures in place (plastic or glass screens) providing effective protecting from infection.

### **5. Does the mask-wearing requirement also apply on the platform (by the track) or inside the railway station?**

Yes. Masks must already be worn in public transport such as trains, trams, buses, ships and boats, aircraft and cable cars. This requirement now also applies to platforms and inside railway stations, airports and at other public transport access points.

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## **6. Do masks also have to be worn in schools? Are there further exceptions to the mask-wearing requirement?**

In compulsory schools, upper secondary schools and tertiary education establishments (such as universities) the mask-wearing requirement applies only if the establishment's precautionary measures require it. This also applies to supplementary childcare facilities and training areas at sports facilities and fitness centres.

## **7. Can you be fined for not wearing a mask despite the compulsory mask requirement?**

Yes. Violations of the mask-wearing requirement are punishable on the basis of the Epidemics Act by a fine of up to CHF 10,000. Negligent violations are also punishable and can be subject to a fine of up to CHF 5,000. Prosecution is the responsibility of the cantons. The offence is assessed by the cantonal authority responsible (the public prosecutor or authority responsible for prosecuting contraventions). Shop owners can decide themselves whether they want to report to the police; the police have a duty to report to the prosecuting authorities any suspected violations of the mask-wearing requirement.

### Rules for restaurant and catering establishments

## **8. What new rules apply to restaurant and catering establishments?**

In all restaurants, bars and nightclubs throughout Switzerland it is now forbidden to consume food and drink standing up. Food and drink may only be consumed sitting down, regardless of whether this is in an indoor space or an outdoor guest area. There is also the compulsory requirement (subject to additional cantonal requirements) for contact data to be recorded for each table or group of guests. This applies to all restaurant and catering establishments, bars and clubs, discos and dance venues as well as to all public facilities that serve food and drink for direct consumption, also at places of leisure, entertainment and recreation, and casinos.

### Rules on private events

## **9. Why are rules on private events being introduced?**

Data from the cantons' contact tracing services show that private events involving friends and family, such as weddings, birthday celebrations and drinks parties, are a frequent place of infection because no precautionary measures are in place in these situations. To reduce transmissions in these settings, new nationwide rules on private events are therefore to be introduced.

## **10. What counts as a private event?**

Private events are events involving friends and family held on invitation. This includes parties in shared flats or on other private premises organised via invitations or social networks.

Events at clubs and leisure organisations (such as scouting and other club activities), by contrast, are not deemed to be private events; these, however, require a set of precautionary measures.

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## **11. What rules now apply to private events?**

Private events with up to 15 people can be held without any restrictions. However, the FOPH's social distancing and hygiene recommendations must be observed.

As before, it is still not necessary for the organiser of private events with 16 to 100 people to formulate a set of precautionary measures. However, a mask-wearing requirement applies. In addition, people may only consume food and drink sitting down, and the contact details of those attending must be recorded. This applies on private premises that are not accessible to the public. If the event takes place in a facility or establishment that is usually accessible to the public (for example a room hired in a hotel or restaurant), the precautionary measures which the hotel or restaurant has formulated for this room apply in addition.

Private events with more than 100 people may only be held in publicly accessible establishments that have a set of precautionary measures in place (for example a restaurant, hotel or event venue). The organiser of the private event must also formulate and implement a specific set of precautionary measures for the event.

## **12. What rules apply in public spaces?**

In addition to the new rules on private events there are also new rules on gatherings in public spaces. For gatherings of up to 15 people, the FOPH's recommendations on social distancing and – if this distance cannot be kept – the wearing of a face mask apply.

Spontaneous gatherings of more than 15 people in public spaces are not permitted. This rule is designed above all to prevent private events from spontaneously moving into public spaces.

Political demonstrations are still permitted subject to the mask-wearing requirement.

There are no changes for public events (concerts, etc.). However, where sectors apply, for example in discos, the size of the individual sectors is reduced from 300 to 100 people. This is to facilitate any contact tracing.

## **13. What is the difference between public events and gatherings of people in public spaces?**

Events in public spaces are limited in time, take place within a defined space or perimeter and are planned as a public or private event (for example guided city tours). By contrast, gatherings of people are generally not planned or organised but take place spontaneously, and there is no specific order of events.

## Nationwide recommendation to work from home

## **14. Why is the federal government again recommending people to work from home (their home office)?**

Working from home helps reduce the amount people travel and thus their contacts, both while travelling and at the workplace. Working from home also reduces the risk that entire work teams will have to go into quarantine if there is a case of Covid-19. The FOPH therefore recommends that as in spring 2020, wherever possible employees work from home. As in spring 2020, businesses are called upon to observe the FOPH's recommendations on

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working from home during the Covid-19 epidemic. However, working from home is not compulsory.

**In summary: these rules apply all over Switzerland from 19 October 2020:**

- **In indoor spaces** there is a legal requirement to wear a mask:
  - in restaurants, bars and clubs, discos and dance venues
  - at all public events
  - at private events with more than 15 people
  - in publicly accessible indoor areas of establishments and facilities, and at public transport access points (railway stations, airports)
  
- **In outdoor spaces** there is a legal requirement to wear a mask:
  - at private events with more than 15 people
  - at political demonstrations
  - in waiting areas for public transport (trains, buses, trams, cable cars, etc.)

At public events with up to 1,000 people in outdoor spaces, the relevant set of precautionary measures must include the necessary protective safeguards (depending on the circumstances distancing, face masks and/or contact details). In addition, at public events with more than 100 people sectors must be created. There is thus no general (blanket) requirement to wear a mask. However, it can be assumed that at events where social distancing cannot be assured, protective masks will be part of the precautionary measures.

- **Food and drink must be consumed sitting down:**
  - in restaurants, bars and clubs, discos and dance venues (also on terraces)
  - at all public events
  - at private events with more than 15 people
  
- **It is a legal requirement for contact details to be recorded:**
  - in restaurants, bars and clubs, discos and dance venues, according to specific rules in each case
  - at private events with more than 15 people

At public events with up to 1,000 people contact data must be recorded if this is included in the set of precautionary measures.

The cantons can go beyond these federal requirements and impose tighter restrictions if necessary in view of the current local epidemiological situation.

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