

Face Masks

A Matter of Public Health in QLD

Unfortunately, we have seen an escalation of complaints and threats from patients being made to our staff and business about the wearing of a face mask on the day of appointment. Hence, we would like to provide information on our current policy on why we ask everyone to wear a face mask when coming to our practice.

In our practice Pandemic Policy and currently in Queensland, you must wear a face mask when attending a healthcare facility. The wearing of face masks in a public or private healthcare facility is mandatory under the *Public Health Act 2005 (QLD)*; *Public Health Face Mask Requirements Direction (No. 5)*.

The Queensland Government COVID-19 Assist Line has advised us that it is the responsibility of the place of business (healthcare facility in this case) to request evidence of reason for not wearing a face mask.

Fortunately, most of our wonderful patients comply with this order without question. We are most grateful for your understanding and keeping our practice safe.

If you cannot wear a face mask, our staff have the right to ask why. Under the *Public Health Face Mask*

Requirements Direction (No.5), you must have a valid medical reason for not wearing a face mask. These 'valid' reasons are found on the Queensland Government website. You do not require a medical certificate, but you must inform the medical condition to the staff before or on the day of your appointment.

We ask that if you are unable to wear a face mask, to please inform our reception team before or on the day of your appointment, so our team can safely prepare your visit to our clinic. As stated above, you must have a valid medical reason.

COVID-19 cannot be seen, smelt or heard. It is a highly infectious disease. The health of our practitioners and staff, as well as the health and wellbeing of other patients and visitors to our clinic, remains paramount.

Extracts from the *Public Health Face Mask Requirements Direction (No. 5)*:

PART 2 – EXEMPTIONS

1. The requirement to wear a face mask under *Paragraph 5* does not apply to:
 - a. an infant or child under 12 years; or
 - b. a person who has a physical or mental health illness or condition, or disability, which makes wearing a face mask unsuitable.

Examples – persons who have obstructed breathing, a serious skin condition on their face, an intellectual disability, a mental health illness, or who have experienced trauma.

Other reasons to remove a face mask for a specific period of time are:

- Conversing with a hearing-impaired patient;
- Consuming medication, food or drink;
- Examination of the face area;
- Undergoing treatment to the face area;
- Safety.

The extract below outlines penalties for anyone (business or individual) who does not follow the *Public Health Order*.

PART 4 – PENALTIES

A person to whom the direction applies commits an offence if the person fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with the direction.

Section 362D of the *Public Health Act 2005* provides:

- A person to whom a public health direction applies must comply with the direction unless the person has a reasonable excuse.
- Failure to comply can incur a maximum penalty of 100 penalty units or 6 months imprisonment.

Please do not abuse our staff or write to us with a claim of discrimination or a human rights issue. Neither of these apply when a business (healthcare facility) is following a *Public Health Order* in place.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Practice Manager on 07 3348 9611