



**Health
Information
and Quality
Authority**

An tÚdarás Um Fhaisnéis
agus Cáilíocht Sláinte

COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis: Protocol for an international review of guidance on the use of face masks to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection

15 November 2022

About the Health Information and Quality Authority

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) is an independent statutory authority established to promote safety and quality in the provision of health and social care services for the benefit of the health and welfare of the public.

HIQA's mandate to date extends across a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector services. Reporting to the Minister for Health and engaging with the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, HIQA has responsibility for the following:

- **Setting standards for health and social care services** — Developing person-centred standards and guidance, based on evidence and international best practice, for health and social care services in Ireland.
- **Regulating social care services** — The Chief Inspector within HIQA is responsible for registering and inspecting residential services for older people and people with a disability, and children's special care units.
- **Regulating health services** — Regulating medical exposure to ionising radiation.
- **Monitoring services** — Monitoring the safety and quality of health services and children's social services, and investigating as necessary serious concerns about the health and welfare of people who use these services.
- **Health technology assessment** — Evaluating the clinical and cost-effectiveness of health programmes, policies, medicines, medical equipment, diagnostic and surgical techniques, health promotion and protection activities, and providing advice to enable the best use of resources and the best outcomes for people who use our health service.
- **Health information** — Advising on the efficient and secure collection and sharing of health information, setting standards, evaluating information resources and publishing information on the delivery and performance of Ireland's health and social care services.
- **National Care Experience Programme** — Carrying out national service-user experience surveys across a range of health services, in conjunction with the Department of Health and the HSE.

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1 Purpose and aim

At the request of the Department of Health, the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) COVID-19 Evidence Synthesis team will identify, review and present public health guidance, produced by international organisations, in relation to the use of face masks to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection. This review will inform the work of the COVID-19 Advisory Group.

2 Process outline

Three distinct steps in the process have been identified. These are listed below and described in more detail in Sections 2.1-2.3:

1. Search of relevant data sources
2. Review and extract relevant data
3. Collate and present information retrieved.

2.1 Search of relevant data sources

Information on current national-level public health guidance regarding the use of face masks in various settings to limit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection will be identified from government resources (websites, reports and press releases). Additionally, public health plans for a change in guidance on the use of face masks in the event of COVID-19 surges will be identified.

This information will be sought from a select number of countries and international public health agencies. The following have been selected for inclusion in this review:

EU/EEA

- Austria
- Belgium
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Portugal

- Spain
- Sweden.

Non - EU

- Australia
- England
- Israel
- New Zealand
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Singapore
- Wales.

International public health agencies

- European Centre For Disease Prevention and Control
- World Health Organization
- US Centers For Disease Control and Prevention.

These countries were chosen based on a combination of geographical proximity to Ireland, population size, European Union membership, current epidemiological situation, and or availability of documents in English. Information will also be sought for Ireland, to allow for direct comparison where appropriate. The associated governmental resources and websites that will be searched are listed in Appendix 1. The international public health agencies were selected based on their role in identifying, assessing and communicating the risk of communicable diseases and the development of evidence-based guidance that can be used to support national policies.

Information on guidance at a regional and or local level is considered outside the scope of this review. Information on the use of face masks by healthcare workers in healthcare settings is also considered outside the scope of the review; however information on the use of face masks in healthcare settings by patients and members of the general public will be included.

2.2 Review and extract relevant data

Upon identification, the following data will be extracted, where available:

- name of the organisation and or agency
- country
- title of webpage and or document
- URL to relevant webpage and or document

- date published and or updated
- current guidance on the use of face masks
- guidance on the use of face masks in the event of COVID-19 surges.

Where data permit, it will be documented whether the guidance is mandatory or advisory and whether there are specific exemptions in place.

2.3 Collate and present information retrieved

The extracted data will be collated and presented in a report format. It will be provided for circulation to the CAG on 10 November 2022.

3 Quality assurance process

The review will be undertaken in accordance with the HTA directorate's Quality Assurance Framework and led by an experienced member of the team. The report will be reviewed by a senior member of the team, to ensure processes are followed and quality maintained.

4 Review and update

Given the rapidly changing environment, this protocol will be regarded as a live document and amended when required to ensure it reflects any changes made to the outlined processes.

Appendix 1: List of websites

Below is a list of websites that will be searched:

EU/EEA countries

- Austria
 - <https://www.sozialministerium.at/en.html>
- Belgium
 - <https://www.info-coronavirus.be/en/>
- Czechia
 - <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/measures-adopted-by-the-czech-government-against-coronavirus-180545/>
 - <https://covid.gov.cz/en/measures/face-masks-and-respirators>
 - <https://www.mzcr.cz/>
- Denmark
 - <https://en.coronasmitte.dk/>
 - <https://sst.dk/da/Viden/AEldre>
- Finland
 - <https://stm.fi/en/frontpage>
 - <https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en>
- France
 - <https://www.gouvernement.fr/info-coronavirus>
 - <https://www.pour-les-personnes-agees.gouv.fr/vivre-dans-un-ehpad/les-differents-etablissements-medicalises/les-ehpad>
- Germany
 - <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en>
- Ireland
 - <https://www.gov.ie/en/>
- Italy

- <http://www.salute.gov.it/portale/nuovocoronavirus/dettaglioFaqNuovoCoronavirus.jsp?lingua=english&id=230#11>

- Netherlands
 - <https://www.government.nl/topics/coronavirus-covid-19>
 - <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/coronavirus-covid-19>
 - <https://www.rivm.nl/coronavirus-covid-19/actueel>

- Norway
 - <https://stm.fi/en/frontpage>
 - <https://www.fhi.no/sv/smittsomme-sykdommer/corona/>

- Portugal
 - <https://covid19estamoson.gov.pt/>
 - <https://covid19.min-saude.pt/>
 - <https://www.dgs.pt/em-destaque.aspx>

- Spain
 - <https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/lang/en/Paginas/index.aspx>
 - <https://www.exteriores.gob.es/en/Paginas/index.aspx>
 - <https://www.sanidad.gob.es/>

- Sweden
 - <https://www.government.se/government-policy/the-governments-work-in-response-to-the-virus-responsible-for-covid-1/>
 - <http://www.folkhalsomyndigheten.se/smittskydd-beredskap/utbrott/aktuella-utbrott/covid-19/>

Non-EU/EEA and UK countries

- Australia
 - <https://www.health.gov.au/>
 - <https://www.health.act.gov.au/>
 - <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

- England
 - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

- Israel
 - <https://www.gov.il/en/Departments/Guides/ramzor-cites-guidelines?chapterIndex=1>
 - <https://govextra.gov.il/ministry-of-health/care-covid19/elderly-care-covid19/>
- New Zealand
 - <https://covid19.govt.nz/traffic-lights/>
 - <https://www.health.govt.nz/>
- Northern Ireland
 - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19>
 - <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/guidance-healthcare>
- Scotland
 - <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>
 - <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-community-and-residential-care-settings/covid-19-information-and-guidance-for-social-community-and-residential-care-settings-version-22/>
- Singapore
 - <https://www.moh.gov.sg/>
- Wales
 - <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
 - <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/information-for-health-and-social-care/>

International public health agencies

- European Centre For Disease Prevention and Control
 - <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19>
 - <https://covid-statistics.jrc.ec.europa.eu/RMeasures>

- World Health Organization
 - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
 - <https://covid19.who.int/measures>

- Centers For Disease Control and Prevention
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/>

Appendix 2 Data extraction template

Country and or organisation	Guidance on the use of face masks
Country:	Current
Organisation:	Planned
Title:	
URL:	
Date published and or updated:	

Published by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA).

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