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GHANA HEALTH SERVICE  
PRIVATE MAIL BAG  
MINISTRIES  
ACCRA. GHANA.

GPS Address: GA-143-  
4609

Tel: 662014  
Fax: 666808  
Email: dg@ghsmail.org

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## **MINISTERIAL DIRECTIVE ON WEARING MASKS IN PUBLIC PLACES TO PREVENT TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19**

### **A. Preamble**

Pursuant to section 169 of the Public Health Act, 2012 (Act 851), the Minister responsible for Health by an Executive Instrument (E.I.61) declared COVID-19 a public health emergency. Section 170 (1) of the Act provides that the Minister of Health may order an individual to take a preventive measure in respect of public health matters.

This directive is hereby issued in compliance with the provisions aforementioned.

### **B. General Directive**

The Minister of Health hereby directs the use of face masks in all public places where it may be difficult to maintain social distancing. The general public is encouraged to wear mask or face covering when going out whether sick or not or attending to a sick person. Incorrect use of face mask carries a high risk of infection. To avoid contamination, infection or transmission of the virus, the following instructions are provided:

1. Procedures for wearing and removing a mask
  - a. Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-base sanitizer before putting on a mask.
  - b. Ensure that your mask fully covers your mouth and nose with no gaps between your face and the mask.
  - c. Avoid touching the mask after you have worn it.
  - d. Remove a mask by passing a finger through the loop of the mask behind one ear and lift off without touching the front of the mask- NEVER TOUCH THE FRONT OF THE MASK.

## 2. Changing and disposing of mask

- a. Do not use the mask for more than 12 hours at a time.
- b. Replace the mask immediately it is damp or soiled.
- c. When using a re-useable mask prepare a soapy or bleach lathered water and drop the mask directly into it on removing. Leave in the water for five (5) minutes before washing. Rinse, dry and iron before reuse.
- d. Do not re-use single use surgical masks more than twice or N95 masks more than three times.
- e. Dispose all used masks in a closed bin or burn it in a safe place. Wash hands immediately with soap and water, where available apply alcohol based sanitizer after dispose.

## 3. Sizes and standards of mask

It is important that all masks used meet the minimum standards of safety. The Ministry of Health recommends that Food and Drugs Authority approved masks are used. Where these are not available, homemade masks made of the following materials or specifications may be used:

- a. JAVA or WAX cloths sown triple layered and stringed with side loops to be worn as hooks to the ear.
- b. Calico inlaid with fabric stiffens and inner covered with side loops to be worn as hooks to the ear.
- c. Homemade masks with strings to be tied behind the neck or head ARE NOT ENCOURAGED.
- d. Adult masks must not be worn by children –CHILD appropriate length masks must be worn by children.

### **B. Mandatory use of masks**

The following groups or persons are required at all times to wear masks:

Food vendors and sellers at markets , commercial vehicle drivers and attendants, commuters on public transports, persons in public and commercial centers, facilities and buildings including but not limited to offices, bars, workshops, restaurants, sports arenas and spas, saloons, shopping malls, churches, clinics and hospitals and all other facilities accessible to the public whether privately or publicly owned.



**DR PATRICK KUMA-ABOAGYE**  
**DIRECTOR GENERAL**  
**FOR: MINISTER FOR HEALTH**