

FAQs: Wearing masks at the VIC

1. What kind of masks are required in VIC as of 25 January?

Close-fitting masks, such as those from fabric issued to personnel earlier in the pandemic, are still required and allowed in most indoor public places at the VIC. However, the use of FFP2 masks is recommended throughout because they filter more effectively.

Following the announcement of the Austrian government, FFP2 masks become mandatory on public transport and in those shops that are open as of 25 January. In line with these regulations, the use of FFP2 masks is mandatory in the pharmacy, cafeteria, bank, commissary, and other indoor services at the VIC where frequent close-range customer interactions cannot be avoided.

2. What are FFP2 masks?

FFP2 masks provide a higher level of protection against viruses than fabric masks. When used correctly, FFP2 masks offer better protection than medical face masks (surgical masks). This is why FFP2 masks are mostly used in healthcare facilities, in areas with an increased risk of infection. They offer aerosol filtration of at least 94 percentage if they have been tested according to the European Norm EN149:2001 (CE certified).

FFP2 masks have different shapes and straps. You can see below an example of FFP2 mask:



Fig 1: Example of a FFP2 mask ([FH Munster](#)).

Each mask should mention:

- Manufacturer's name
- Mask
- CE number of the certification body **EN 149:2001 + A1: 2009** + the mask class (FFP2)

If any of these entries are missing, the mask will be considered non-compliant. The masks should not have exhalation filters.

EN 149 FFP2 masks have similar performance requirements to US N95 masks and Chinese KN95.

3. Where can I buy FFP2 masks?

FFP2 masks can be purchased in supermarkets, pharmacies and online. A limited stock will be also available in the Commissary.

Staff with increased workplace exposure such as those working in laboratories or in the Commissary will be supplied with these masks while working.

4. Can I reuse the FFP2 mask?

The FFP2 masks are designed as single-use products, shall be disposed of after use to avoid further risk of infection. However, FFP2 masks used for private use (e.g. shopping, transport) are considered less likely to be exposed to pathogens and can therefore be reused if handled properly.

For private use, an average of one mask per week is a good rule of thumb. In case it gets wet it should be allowed to dry first.

[Experts](#) recommend having one FFP2 for each day and then let each of them dry for one week and begin using them again starting with the first FFP2 used the previous week. Following this routine (as seen below) will ensure that there is no viable virus present anymore.

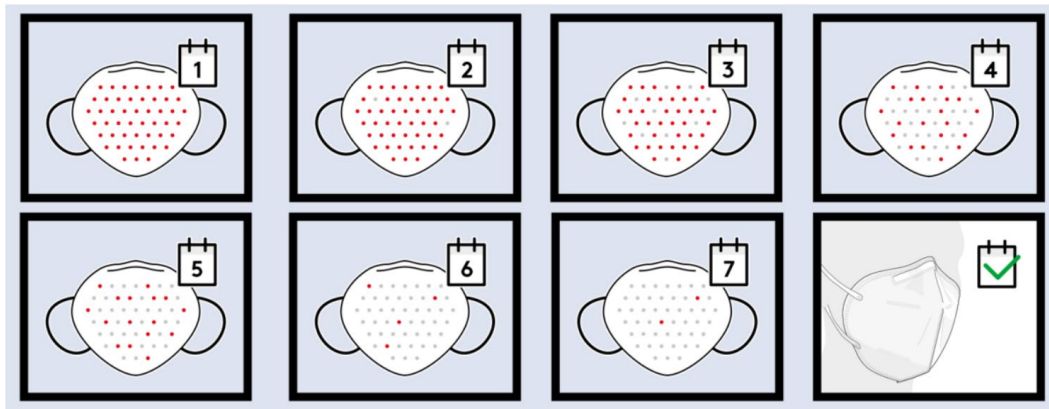


Fig 2: Disinfection method: 7 days drying in room air temperature ([FH Munster](#)).

Another method is to use 80 degrees Celsius dry heat for one hour to re-use the FFP2 mask.

[According to the available sources](#), the reuse could be done up to five times in both cases.

Dirty, damaged masks or masks used during a close contact with a positive COVID-19 case should be immediately discarded.

Please note that any disinfectant or wet cleaning solution will destroy/dissolve the paper envelope.

5. Do I have to wear FFP2 in a shared office?

Two-meter physical distance must be maintained between personnel in shared offices. Space in the offices should be arranged so that personnel do not sit directly across from each other without a protective barrier. In case distance of two metres cannot be maintained, additional measures must be put in place such as alternate working schedule, physical barrier, or plexiglas shields. One of such measures is wearing face masks, preferably FFP2 types.

IAEA staff members in shared offices can contact MTGS for an assessment of their current office arrangements [here](#). (Please fill in the survey only if you work for the IAEA.)

6. Do I have to wear FFP2 masks at meetings?

The use of FFP2 masks is recommended in meetings in the exceptional cases when they cannot be held virtually. Following recommendations of the VIC Medical Service, virtual meetings are encouraged as the main form of professional interaction.

7. What if I cannot wear a mask because of health reasons?

People who cannot wear a mask for health reasons must hold a certificate confirming this from a doctor licensed to practise in Austria.

For more information, please contact VIC Medical Service: medicaladmin@iaea.org.

References:

- [FH Munster - Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der eigenverantwortlichen Wiederverwendung von FFP2-Masken für den Privatgebrauch](#)
- [Sozial Bundesministerium](#)