

Guidance for Patients Requesting Face Covering Exemption Letters

Sheffield
LMC



Wearing face coverings has become mandatory on public transport and comes into effect in shops on 24 July 2020.

We are aware that some patients might be understandably anxious about the Government's recent announcements around the use of face masks in various public settings.

GPs are **not** in a position to provide individual risk assessments or letters for patients who feel that they should be exempt from wearing a face mask in these settings.

Sheffield Local Medical Committee has therefore prepared this guidance note as the statutory body that advises and supports all GPs and practice teams across the city.

The government guidance on exemptions suggests there is no requirement for evidence for exemption. Therefore, it is sufficient for an individual to self-declare this. Indeed, some transport authorities have produced their own self-declaration forms.

The responsibility for issuing exemption certificates in line with national guidance lies with the service provider not your GP. Similarly, practices are under no obligation to provide letters of support for anyone who does not fall under the list of exemptions but considers they have another reason to be exempted.

The list of exemptions from wearing face-coverings include:

- If you have a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability that means you cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering.
- If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause you severe distress.
- If you are travelling with, or providing assistance to, someone who relies on lip reading to communicate.
- If you are travelling to avoid injury or escape the risk of harm, and you do not have a face covering with you.
- If you need to remove it during your journey to avoid harm or injury or the risk of harm or injury to yourself or others.
- If you need to eat, drink, or take medication you can remove your face covering.
- If you are asked to remove your face covering by a police officer or other official, for example to check your railcard.
- A child under the age of 11.

The full guidance can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers#exemptions-face-coverings>

We hope that this guidance provides some clarity on this issue.