

WHO updates COVID-19 guidelines on masks, treatments and patient care

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Masks continue to be a key tool against COVID-19

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has updated its guidelines on mask wearing in community settings, COVID-19 treatments, and clinical management. This is part of a continuous process of reviewing such materials, working with guideline development groups composed of independent, international experts who consider the latest available evidence and the changing epidemiology.

WHO continues to recommend the use of masks by the public in specific situations, and this update recommends their use irrespective of the local epidemiological situation, given the current spread of the COVID-19 globally.

WHO advises that a COVID-19 patient can be discharged from isolation early if they test negative on an antigen-based rapid test.

Without testing, for patients with symptoms, the new guidelines suggest 10 days of isolation from the date of symptom onset. Previously, WHO advised that patients be discharged 10 days after symptom onset, plus at least three additional days since their symptoms had resolved.

For those who test positive for COVID-19 but do not have any signs or symptoms, WHO now suggests 5 days of isolation in the absence of testing, compared to 10 days previously.

WHO has extended its strong recommendation for the use of nirmatrelvir-ritonavir (also known by its brand name 'Paxlovid'). Nirmatrelvir-ritonavir was first recommended by WHO in April 2022. WHO strongly recommends its use in mild or moderate COVID-19 patients who are at high-risk of hospitalisation.