

World Mask Week is a global movement to emphasize the critical role of continued masking in reaching the end of the COVID-19 pandemic

12 July 2021, Cairo — WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region has joined forces with the Pandemic Action Network and partners in support of World Mask Week, July 12-18, 2021.

Masking in public, particularly, in crowded and/or poorly ventilated places/spaces in combination with hand hygiene and physical distancing along with vaccination, is one of the best ways we can protect ourselves and others against COVID-19. Now more than ever, we must stay focused on what keeps us safe and do what we can to end the pandemic.

This year is on track to be a deadlier year in the pandemic than 2020, but the context is different. As the pandemic continues amidst fatigue in much of the world, we are increasingly seeing a two-track pandemic where the pandemic persists with the spread of variants in some countries and regions while others are lifting masking and other public health restrictions. World Mask Week initiative encourages people and organizations around the world to rally behind the continued importance of wearing a mask.

“WHO urges everyone to do it all; masking should be used as part of a comprehensive strategy of measures to suppress transmission and save lives; wear a mask, keep distant, perform hand hygiene, get vaccinated, and maintain adequate ventilation in indoor settings,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean Region. “Let's keep masking — not just for ourselves, but to protect our families, our communities, those who are most vulnerable, and the world.

Masks block the spray of droplets from sneezing, coughing, talking, singing, or shouting when worn over the mouth and nose. While a COVID-19 vaccine will prevent serious illness and death, the extent to which it prevents people from passing the virus on to others is still emerging. In addition, consistent mask wearing can also reduce the spread of the virus among people who are infected with COVID-19, but do not have symptoms or are unaware they have it.

WHO advises that the general public should wear mask in all indoor settings and in outdoor settings where physical distancing of at least 1 metre cannot be maintained. WHO also

recommends universal masking for all persons within the health facility. For any mask type, appropriate use, storage and cleaning or disposal are essential to ensure that they are as effective as possible and to avoid an increased transmission risk.

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