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Face masks an extra precaution against COVID-19

Face masks are a vital added protection against COVID-19 after physical distancing, staying home when sick and washing your hands.

Liverpool Hospital respiratory staff specialist Dr Jonathan Williamson said people should wear a mask if they could not maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres from others, particularly in high-risk areas such as public transport, shopping centres and supermarkets, and if they were caring for vulnerable and elderly people.

“If you are in a situation where there is no opportunity for physical distancing, then we strongly recommend the use of face masks,” Dr Williamson said.

“The main value of wearing a mask is to protect other people. Masks prevent sick people from infecting others but please remember, you shouldn’t be going out if you are unwell.”

Dr Williamson said it was important to wear masks correctly to ensure their effectiveness.

“Wash or sanitise your hands before putting on the mask or taking it off and do not touch the mask material while wearing or removing it,” Dr Williamson said.

“Make sure the mask covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly under your chin, over the bridge of your nose and against the sides of your face and don’t allow it to hang around your face or under your nose.”

Dr Williamson said people should not reuse single-use masks and should dispose of them safely. Reusable masks should be washed regularly and dried after use and stored in a clean, dry place.

He said properly constructed cloth masks should be made from at least three layers of breathable fabric to ensure adequate protection.

All visitors to public hospitals in south western Sydney must wear a face mask. A mask will be provided during wellness screening at the hospital entrance if visitors do not have a mask.

Children under 12 years of age do not need to wear a mask and toddlers under two years of age and babies must not wear masks, which are a choking and suffocation risk.

For more information and to keep up to date on the coronavirus visit www.health.nsw.gov.au.

The NSW Government has already committed \$800 million extra funding for NSW Health to significantly increase capacity in NSW public hospitals, particularly within ICUs and emergency departments on top of its \$26.7 billion 2019-20 Budget.