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NEW ZEALAND (/NEWS/NATIONAL) / POLITICS

## Masks to be compulsory on some transport - Ardern, Hipkins announce Cabinet decision

31 August 2020  
COVID-timeline

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Masks will be mandatory on all domestic flights in New Zealand, as well as public transport in Auckland, from Thursday.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins have been speaking after Cabinet met today to discuss whether to make masks mandatory (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/430701/covid-19-jacinda-ardern-says-government-moving-on-mask-use>) and the exact settings for it.

Hipkins says masks will be required (<https://covid19.govt.nz/updates-and-resources/latest-updates/masks-to-be-worn-on-auckland-public-transport-and-all-domestic-flights/>) to be worn on all public transport within Auckland, and travelling in and out of the city, and all domestic flights around the country from Thursday this week.

School buses will be exempt as well as children under the age of 12, and people with a disability or condition that makes wearing a mask unsuitable, he says.

The overall guidance to Kiwis is that when you are in a confined space, you should be wearing a mask, he says, but it is hard to mandate for that so the government is relying on people using common sense.

Hipkins say the government has preserved the good will of New Zealanders during the Covid-19 response and wants to make sure that when mandating mask use, that good will is kept.

"I think what we have seen already in the past three days is that there's a high degree of compliance with mask use."

Ardern says Cabinet today made the decisions to improve the alert level 1 settings, saying despite robust control measures, no system is foolproof.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern Photo: RNZ / Dan Cook

She says the government has moved to mandate mask use because while management of Covid-19 at alert level 1 has improved, new efforts must be employed to make it safer.

She says on flights, a blanket provision for masks was simpler, given the level of travel in and out of Auckland. The government did not hold back on this decision due to a concern about a lack of public buy-in, she says.

University of Otago public health expert, professor Nick Wilson, has been advocating for mandatory mask use since April.

Ahead of the Cabinet decision today, he told *Midday Report* it was a good idea to mandate mask use on flights and public transport - but it should be applied to the whole country

Otago University Professor Nick Wilson.  
Photo: Supplied / Otago University  
Wellington

(<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/middayreport/audio/2018772976/masks-may-be-mandatory-on-flights-auckland-public-transport>), not just Auckland.

"We really have had way too many border control failures recently, in fact we've had eight since early August, so around once every two weeks. So we've really got to both improve our border defences and have these extra safeguards, such as mask wearing on public transport."

These safeguards needed to be in place until border measures were improved, such as pre-flight testing and pre-flight quarantine, he said.

He also called for a much better smartphone app for contact tracing and the use of other digital technologies to help with contact tracing.

"Other countries are using better systems and we need to learn from them," he said.

"We've been making extremely slow progress in this area, while, for example, Singapore at least a month ago rolled out its equivalent of the Covid card, and places like Ireland have made a much better app available."

Wilson said he knew progress was being made in this area, but it was "way too slow".