

Customers who refuse to wear a face covering on public transport risk being fined as national regulations reintroduced

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People travelling on public transport must wear face coverings for the duration of their journey from today or risk being fined, unless they are exempt.

The Government has confirmed that face coverings will become compulsory again on public transport and in shops across the country in order to help prevent the spread of the new COVID-19 Omicron variant in the UK. Since the Government removed the national requirement to wear a face covering on public transport, face coverings have remained mandatory on Transport for London (TfL) services under TfL's condition of carriage but enforcement powers under these conditions were highly limited.

This means that customers must wear a face covering that covers their nose and mouth for their entire journey, including on transport services, in stations and on platforms, unless they are exempt. Additionally, face coverings should be worn by everyone in taxi and private hire vehicles for the duration of their journey. Exemptions include people who have trouble breathing, children and anyone who finds it difficult

to manage face coverings correctly.

TfL's 500 uniformed enforcement officers and TfL's police partners will be out across the transport network ensuring that customers comply with the Government regulation. Anybody who does not comply may be refused entry, directed to leave the network or face a fine. Since the original national rules ceased to apply on 19 July, TfL has continued to require customers to wear a face covering. The change to Government regulations today means that officers will once again be able to issue penalty notice fines of up to £200 to those who refuse to comply.

Customers are reminded to treat everyone on the network with respect and compassion, and to understand that some customers and staff will be unable to wear a face covering for medical reasons or other permitted reasons that may not be immediately obvious.

Scientific advice suggests that, although face coverings are unlikely to prevent an individual from catching the coronavirus, they can help prevent someone who is infected from infecting others and thus help control the virus.

To support the reintroduction of national regulations, TfL is also handing out face coverings at key locations across the capital for a short time to help Londoners do the right thing and keep each other safe. Alternatively, face coverings can be purchased at a number of local shops or online.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "Evidence shows that mask-wearing is the single most effective public health measure at tackling Covid. I welcome the Government's announcement that face coverings are now compulsory in shops and on public transport nationwide, as they already are across the TfL network. This is a measure I have long been calling for.

"Provided with proper enforcement powers, TfL will now be able to work with policing partners and really boost compliance on the network, with the selfish few who refuse to wear a face covering facing a penalty fine, rather than just being denied entry to transport services. TfL enforcement officers will continue to monitor compliance across the network to keep passengers and staff as safe as possible."

Siwan Hayward, Director of Compliance, Policing, Operations and Security at TfL, said: "Throughout the pandemic the vast majority of people have been doing the right thing and keeping each other safe from the virus, for which we're very grateful. The Government has now issued a regulation which means all customers must wear face coverings on public transport unless they are exempt as part of the ongoing fight against COVID.

"Our enforcement officers and our Police partners will enforce this requirement, including denying entry to our services and, with additional powers as a result of the Government's regulation, issuing a financial penalty to those who refuse to comply. We will continue to monitor compliance across the network and will take action as necessary to ensure that our customers and staff remain safe on our network."

TfL is continuing to ensure customers can travel safely and confidently on its services. Tube trains and stations are cleaned with hospital-grade cleaning substances that kill viruses and bacteria on contact and provide ongoing protection. Independent testing by Imperial College London has been carried out monthly

since September 2020, taking swabs of touch points in stations, buses and air samples in ticket halls.

No traces of coronavirus on TfL's public transport network have been found since independent testing began. TfL's enhanced cleaning regime continues to make the network cleaner than ever, with more than 1,100 hand sanitisers installed across the network, and at least 200 UV light devices continually sanitising escalator handrails. TfL's buses and trains are well ventilated, with air on a typical train carriage changing every two or three minutes on average.

Photo credit: Transport for London