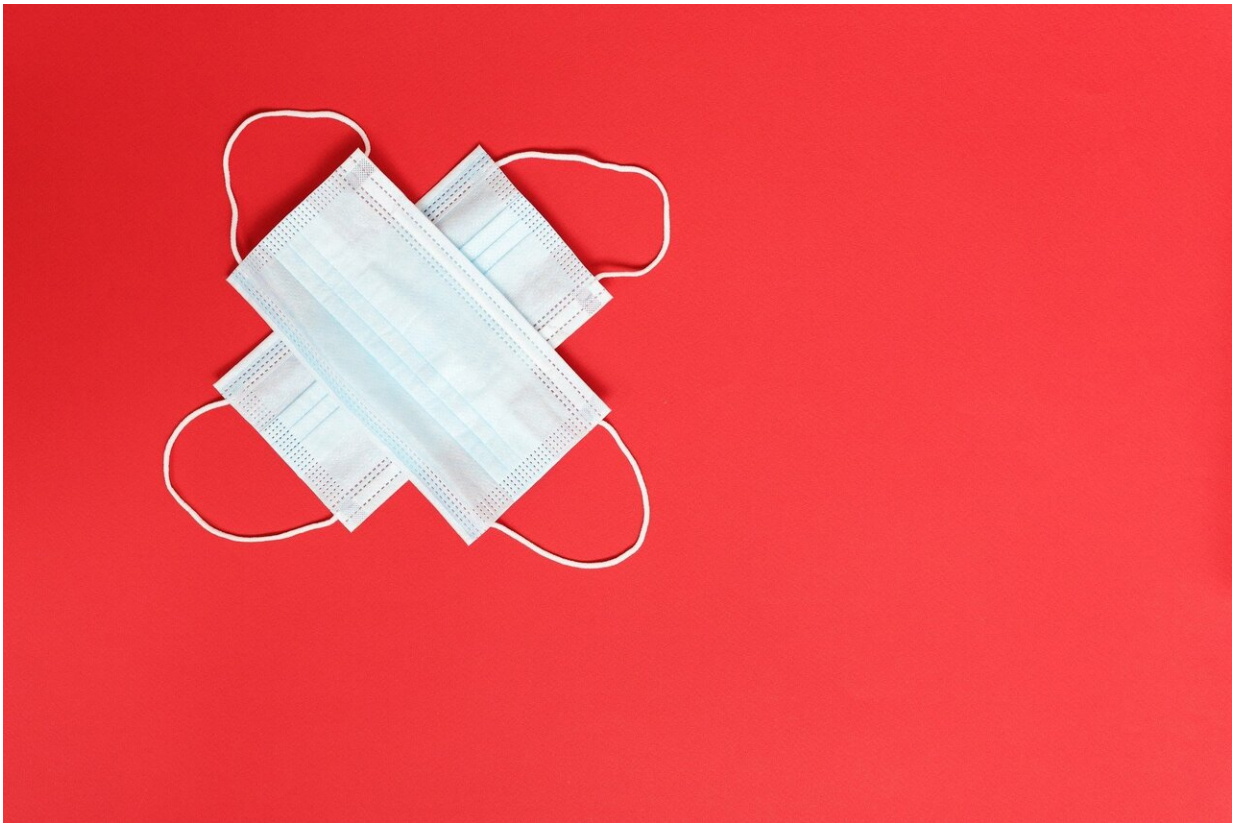


Norway recommends face masks on some public transport

August 14 2020



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Norway on Friday recommended that passengers on public transport in and around Oslo use masks during rush hour to curb the spread of COVID-19, after being one of the last holdouts on recommending face

coverings.

The recommendation, issued by the country's health agency, was limited to situations when travellers could not "maintain one metre's distance," and is not mandatory.

It was also limited to the Oslo area and the region of Indre Ostfold, south of the capital, and children were not recommended to use masks.

"The recommendation will be in place for 14 days, starting Monday," health minister Bent Hoie told a press conference on Friday.

Face masks would also be recommended for people travelling from the airport after returning from trips to countries that require self-isolation in Norway.

Mask use was also encouraged for those caring for a person with a suspected or confirmed infection or those working in settings where close face-to-face interactions could not be avoided.

The spread of the disease nearly came to a halt in Norway during the summer but in recent weeks there has been an uptick.

However, authorities pointed out Friday that there has also been an increase in testing and that the increase can be traced to identified local clusters.

"The development does not so far imply a national flare-up," Line Vold, director of communicable diseases and preparedness at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI), told reporters.

Norway, together with other Nordic countries, has been one of the last holdouts as most countries around the world have started either

recommending or requiring [face masks](#) in public settings.

Despite the policy turnaround, officials stressed that face masks were less effective than distancing measures.

According to FHI, research suggested that mask use in the population only reduced the risk of infection by about 40 percent, compared to an 80 percent reduction when people kept one at least metre apart.

"Face masks should therefore not replace distancing measures," Vold said.

In recent weeks, both Denmark and Finland have also reversed course on the use of face masks in public.

Neighbouring Sweden, standing out for its softer approach to curbing the spread of COVID-19, is still not recommending [masks](#), arguing their effectiveness is still unproven.

Sweden's state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell has however said the measure could be introduced in future.

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