

Masking indoors now optional - subject to premises owners' discretion

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Bernama

Masking indoors is now optional - but subject to premises owners' approval, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin declared today.

He said premises owners can decide to either enforce masking indoors or make it optional.

The new ruling is effective immediately, although Khairy said the Health Ministry strongly encouraged the public to continue wearing masks indoors.

Wearing masks is still mandatory when using public transport - including e-hailing cars and school busses - as well as at health facilities such as clinics, hospitals, and dialysis centres, and if a person tests positive for Covid-19.

Wearing masks indoors is also encouraged when at crowded places such as places of worship, stadiums, or when displaying symptoms, and for high-risk individuals.

Khairy said the new ruling on masks was made after evaluating the Covid-19 situation and taking into account current needs.

Further, the minister warned that the loosening of the standard operating procedure (SOP) for mask usage should not be taken as a sign to view the risk of Covid-19 infection lightly.

"The relaxation given does not mean that the public can take the risk of Covid-19 infection lightly and it also doesn't mean that it will not be enforced again if the Covid-19 situation worsens in our country.

"For now, we are relaxing but we can apply this protocol at any time if the situation of Covid-19 worsens in our country," he said.

He added that the public must bear greater individual responsibility following the change of SOP.

"With this easing of rules, the public must bear greater individual responsibility not just for themselves but for the whole community.

"The Health Ministry believes that the public will continue to practise good self-control, including ensuring good personal hygiene and avoiding infectious

diseases such as Covid-19," he added.

The Health Ministry had already relaxed rules for wearing masks outdoors on May 1.

Paxlovid usage

Khairy also addressed the usage of the antiviral Paxlovid treatment in Covid-19 patients, saying that the treatment has been proven to be effective among Malaysians.

"We find that for those who have been prescribed Paxlovid, it has proven to be very effective.

"Almost everyone who received Paxlovid has seen milder symptoms and has avoided serious hospitalisation - if at all," he told reporters today.

In June, it was announced that Paxlovid courses will be utilised to treat Covid-19 in private hospitals, following its successful utilisation in government health facilities.

It is said that treatments using Paxlovid are offered to patients for free at private

hospitals.

“However, patients are still subject to charges for the consultation services and other related charges determined by the private health facilities,” Khairy said.

Paxlovid has been used in government health facilities beginning April 15 with priority given to high-risk Covid-19 patients.

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