

BSI Flex 5555

Version 2, March 2021

Community face coverings — Specification



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Foreword

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Acknowledgement is given to the following organizations and their representatives as well as individuals who contributed as members of the Advisory Group:

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Supersession

This version of BSI Flex 5555, v2.0:2021-03, supersedes BSI Flex 5555 v1.0:2021-01, which is withdrawn.

Relationship with other publications

This BSI Flex was adapted from the CEN Workshop Agreement, *Community face coverings — Guide to minimum requirements, methods of testing and use*. The CEN Workshop Agreement is now being further developed as the basis for a CEN Technical Specification. A decision on whether this BSI Flex will be withdrawn once the CEN Technical Specification is published will be made once the content of the CEN Technical Specification has been finalized.

Information about this document

This version of the BSI Flex introduces the following principal changes:

- **Terms and definitions:** a note has been added to the definition of “community face coverings” to cover the fact that they are often referred to as “face masks” (see 3.4).
- **Cleaning:** requirements around cleaning have changed and guidance on washing cycles has been added (see 5.5).
- **Size and fit:** requirements have been expanded (see 5.2).
- **Fastenings:** requirements regarding tensile load have been changed and there are now different requirements for single-use and reusable coverings (see 5.7).
- **Breathing resistance:** a change to the differential pressure requirement has been made and notes have been added (see 5.10).
- **Labelling and instructions for use:** new information added (see Clause 7).
- **Environmental considerations:** a new requirement has been added with additional notes (see Clause 8).
- **Face coverings for children:** an informative annex has been added (see Annex A).

Use of this document

The provisions of this BSI Flex are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “shall”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Where words have alternative spellings, the preferred spelling of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary is used (e.g. “organization” rather than “organisation”).

Please note that the content in this release is part of an iterative process and changes from time to time with subsequent iterations.

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Introduction

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, people were asked to wear face coverings to reduce the transmission of the coronavirus, which can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe heavily. There has therefore been a need to define the performance requirements for these products.

The World Health Organization (WHO) have provided guidance on the factors which are to be considered for face coverings, as well as examples of where the general public are encouraged to use medical and non-medical masks (i.e. face coverings) in areas with known or suspected community transmission [1].

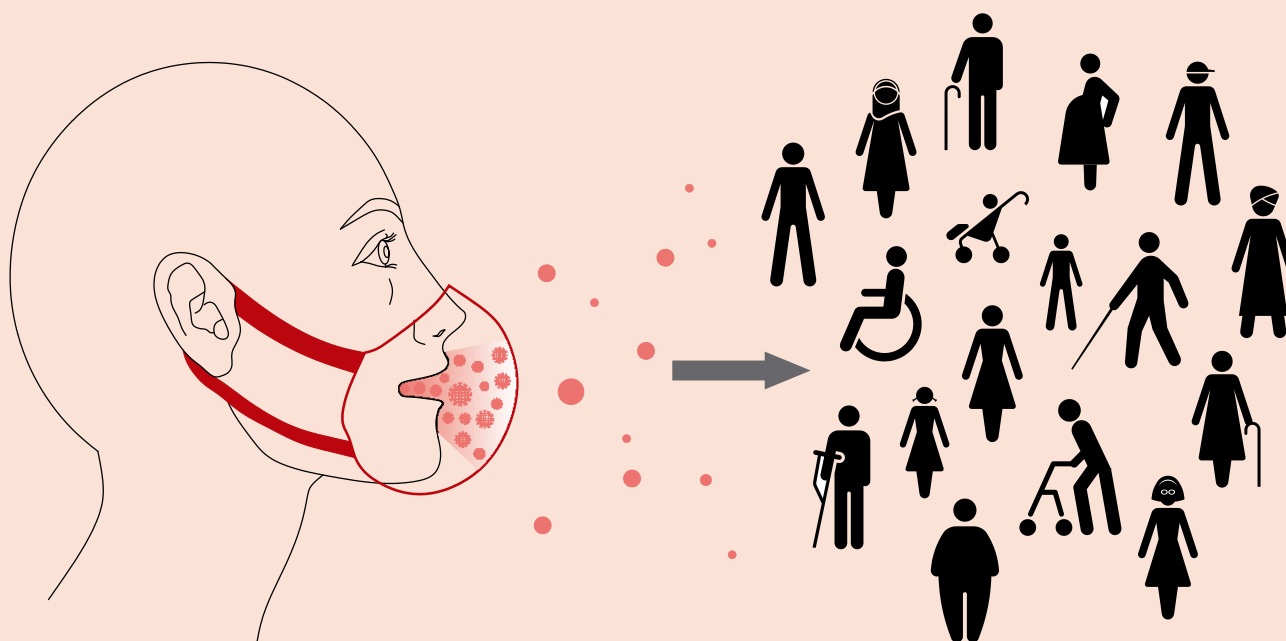
Community face coverings are intended for use by people not displaying any clinical symptoms of viral or bacterial infection and who do not come into contact with people displaying such symptoms.

Community face coverings are not suitable for children under 3 years of age. It is recommended that children between 3 and 11 years are supervised while wearing the community face covering. See Annex A for more information.

NOTE The minimum age criteria can be higher in accordance with national recommendations.

Community face coverings are intended for use in community settings where other forms of face coverings are not commonly used (e.g. medical or occupational masks or respirators). Community face coverings are intended to protect others by reducing the projection of the wearer's respiratory droplets, saliva, sputum or respiratory secretions when talking, coughing or sneezing. Community face coverings are designed to offer a level of protection for those around the wearer, but they can also reduce penetration by respiratory droplets from another person into the wearer's nose and mouth. A face covering can also reduce the amount a wearer touches their nose and mouth. See Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Limitation of the projection of respiratory droplets to the environment



This document specifies the minimum performance requirements and associated test methods for community face coverings.

This document specifies a filtration level for the community face coverings corresponding to the use defined by national authorities. Examples of where the general public should be encouraged to use them are given in World Health Organization recommendations [1].

This document provides support for the potential producers of these community face coverings.

Community face coverings might be legally required to be worn in a number of settings, and attention is drawn to national regulations.

Clear face coverings are out of scope of this version of the BSI Flex, however, NHS England is currently drafting guidance on clear face coverings as it is recognized that being able to see other's mouths and facial expressions is important to aiding communication for all.

IMPORTANT Community face coverings are not subject to a mandatory conformity assessment by Approved Bodies or laboratories. Their design in accordance with accepted best practices and production quality control remain the producer's responsibility. The producer might need to call upon a laboratory to verify the required performance.

IMPORTANT A community face covering will have maximum effectiveness if it is worn in direct contact with bare skin. Facial hair can influence the effectiveness of the face covering, and those with facial hair should take extra precautions of social distancing.

IMPORTANT The community face coverings specified in this document do not fall under medical devices within the meaning of Part II of the Medical Devices Regulations 2002 (No. 618) (as amended) [2] or Directive 93/42/CEE [3] or Regulation (EU) 2017/745 [4], nor as a personal protective equipment (PPE) within the meaning of Regulation (EU) 2016/425 [5]. The General Product Safety Regulations, GPSR, [6] requires all products placed on the market are safe for consumers.