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Deputy Emer Higgins

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Dear Deputy Higgins

To ask the Minister for Health the breakdown of the various Covid-19-related public information campaigns run by his Department to date; and the number that relate specifically on the way to properly wear a face covering and to dispose and wash face masks appropriately.

The HSE has led the operational health response to COVID-19, and the extensive public health information, advertising and education programme that is a central part of that response.

Communicating with the public, listening to their needs and giving accurate and easy-to-follow health advice is considered a central part of any country's pandemic response plan.

The COVID-19 public and staff information campaigns use a range of communications channels, including media relations with trusted health leaders and experts, websites, social media, search advertising, digital display, posted materials, out of home (posters, billboards, projections, transport), TV, video on demand, radio and digital audio advertising, to provide clear public health advice that is easy for people to understand and act on. We also connect with a group of over 500 supportive partner organisations and stakeholders within health and across society.

The HSE and Department of Health conduct regular research to check people's understanding of and their reaction to the information and ongoing situation, allowing any new messages or content to be developed in line with feedback. Consistently high satisfaction levels with the HSE's and the Dept of Health's information and communications have been reported in our research.

Using face coverings, and using them correctly, has been promoted by HSE since their use was recommended by NPHET in June 2020. In June, HSE ran a TV, radio and social media campaign on face coverings. [Watch the TV ad here.](#)

To date the HSE has ran 17 TV public information campaigns on COVID-19 as well as a range of shorter term social media campaigns. The use of face coverings has been promoted in 16 public information campaigns since then and I've included a list of those campaigns and links to TV ads below.

At the time, face coverings were a new concept that we had to learn and get used to. Market research conducted by the Department of Health and HSE has since shown consistently high compliance with the protective behaviour of wearing face coverings.

'We can do this' is the HSE's latest public information campaign promoting the protective behaviours which reduce the spread of COVID-19. Wearing face coverings is one of these four key behaviours.

The campaign responds to the understandable frustration the public is feeling at this stage of the pandemic and reinforces the collective power of those simple but very important steps – keep our distance, wear face coverings, keep our hands clean and phone our GP as soon as we have any symptoms.

[Watch the We Can Do This TV ad.](#)

I've included a full list of HSE COVID-19 TV ads below for your reference.

HSE content is promoted on a continuous basis through social media channels including Facebook, Instagram (posts and stories), Twitter and TikTok. Use of face masks, wearing face masks correctly and disposal of face masks content has featured regularly on the HSE social media channels. The reach of these posts is well over 8 million and are among our top performing content.

Examples of content on each channel:

<https://www.facebook.com/HSElive/posts/1691803741019752>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CKdr1LFAZxM/>

<https://www.tiktok.com/@hselive/video/6869749626073877761>

<https://twitter.com/HSELive/status/1295653160493744128>

HSE.ie content is promoted on a continuous basis on our social media channels

There is detailed up to date content on proper wearing and disposal of face coverings on [hse.ie](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-coverings-masks-and-covid-19/how-to-wear.html):

- [How to properly wear face coverings and masks: https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-coverings-masks-and-covid-19/how-to-wear.html](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-coverings-masks-and-covid-19/how-to-wear.html)
- [How to remove and dispose of face coverings and masks: https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-coverings-masks-and-covid-19/how-to-wear.html#removing](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/face-coverings-masks-and-covid-19/how-to-wear.html#removing)

Since the 3rd May 2020 there have been 327.6k page views on this content and it has been promoted through social media with one social post on it with a reach of 70k.

There are also several posters available for download which have been promoted through HSE stakeholder and partner network regularly:

- [COVID-19 Face coverings \(PDF, 715 KB, 1 page\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Face coverings \(Irish\) \(PDF, 705 KB, 1 page\)](#)
- [How to use face coverings](#)

Here is summary of COVID-19 public information TV campaigns to date:

Campaign	Date	Key messages	Key channels
1. COVID-19	March 2020	COVID is here; take a few steps to slow virus. Visit hse.ie or call HSELive	TV, radio, press, social
2. Symptoms	March 2020	COVID is here; know the symptoms Visit hse.ie or call HSELive	TV, radio, social
3. Keep your distance	March 2020	Keep 2m distance for essential trips, to slow spread.	TV, radio, social, digital display
4. Stay at home	April 2020	Stay at home; 2m distance when essential trips; 2km for exercise; 70+ vulnerable home all times; prevention measures. Visit hse.ie or call HSELive	TV
5. Cocooning	April 2020	COVID is here; over 70s and medically vulnerable to cocoon; you will be supported.	TV, radio, press, social
6. Hold Firm	May 2020	Importance of following public health advice and getting through this together. Hold Firm.	TV, radio, press, social, OOH
7. Face covering	June 2020	How and where to wear a face covering	TV, radio, press, social
8. COVID Tracker app	July 2020	Download the COVID Tracker app	TV, radio, digital display, press, social
9. Living with COVID	August 2020	Take a step back, clean hands, wear a face covering, cover cough, download app.	TV, radio, OOH
10. Symptoms & testing	Sept 2020	List of 4 symptoms; free GP consultation and test. Still a problem; we're all the answer.	TV, radio, OOH, social
11. Living with COVID (revised)	Oct 2020	Revised to reflect Level 5 scenes: Take a step back, clean hands, wear face covering, cover cough, download app. Still a problem; we're all the answer.	TV, radio, social

12. The Bubble	Oct 2020	Social distance protects us - visualisation of protection through bubbles, and burst of bubbles when not adhered to. Keep your guard up. Face coverings shown.	TV, radio, social, digital display
13. Restricted movement/self-isolation	Nov 2020	Advice on when to self-isolate (have COVID, symptoms waiting for test/result) and when to restrict movements (close contact, just arrived to Ireland). Face coverings shown	TV, radio, social
14. HoldFirm (revised)	Nov 2020	Importance of following public health advice and getting through this together. Hold Firm. Face coverings shown.	TV, radio, social
15. Christmas Bubbles	Dec 2020	Social distance protects us - visualisation of protection through bubbles, and burst of bubbles when not adhered to. Keep your guard up - Stay safe this Christmas. Face coverings shown.	TV, radio, social
16. Restricted movement/self-isolation (revised)	Jan-21	Advice on when to self-isolate (have COVID, symptoms waiting for test/result) and when to restrict movements (close contact). Face coverings shown	TV, radio, social
17. We can do this	March 21	We can do. Better days are coming but we need to Hold Firm and keep taking these simple but very important steps – keep our distance, wear face coverings, keep our hands clean and phone our GP as soon as we have any symptoms.	TV, Radio, digital display, social

I trust this addresses your question. If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,

Mary Brodie

Communications Directorate