

COVID-19 Face masks for the public

Think of it as a matter of respect

*I'm not sick.
I'm wearing this mask out of respect for you.
I don't want to infect you if I have COVID-19 and don't know it yet.*

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends we wear cloth face coverings when in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

Face masks help decrease the likelihood a person with a respiratory disease will spread it to others. There is no good research to show how effective non-commercial cloth masks will be in reducing the spread of COVID-19, but it makes sense that they could help. We don't have time to do a careful research trial. We have to act now. As long as you understand their limitations and care for them, cloth face mask use can't hurt.

Don't be fooled. Wearing any type of mask is no guarantee you won't get COVID-19. Wearing a mask is just one part of a prevention program. The others are:

1. Hand washing with soap and water or using hand sanitizer frequently.
2. Avoiding touching your face with unwashed hands.
3. Avoiding close contact—social distancing.
4. Covering your mouth and nose if you cough—like with a face mask.
5. Disinfecting commonly touched surfaces.
6. Staying at home if you have a cold, flu, fever, or new respiratory illness.

Respect your medical and emergency services providers.

1. Don't wear N95 or surgical masks.
2. If you bought N95 or surgical masks, keep them safe and unopened.
3. If a shortage occurs, donate them to your local hospital.

Help your neighbors.

Make cloth face masks if you have sewing skills. Share them with your friends, family, and neighbors.

It's a matter of respect.

Additional information:

Here is a link to the CDC website information on face coverings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

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Here is a link to a design:

https://www.bellin.org/images/uploads/pdf/Bellin_Health_Prefered_Cloth_Mask_Instructions_and_Photos.pdf. The interfacing specified in this design is not necessary and may make the mask cumbersome to make, clean, and don. If you make masks for others, the ones in this link are large; consider making them about ½ inch less side to side for smaller faces.

There are many websites and videos showing how to make masks. Remember, though, faces vary in size and no one design will fit everyone. The fabric should be washable and be close woven; cotton appears to be the best choice. Elastic ear bands are easier to use. There is no proof that adding an internal filter helps.

There is no good research on how long the COVID-19 virus retains its ability to infect when it lands on fabric. It persists for three days or more on hard surfaces like metal and plastic but loses infectiousness in hours on cardboard. It probably loses infectiousness in a matter of hours on fabric, as it true of other respiratory viruses, but the final word is not in yet. Viruses survive in warm moist surfaces (think a mask you wear all day). They lose their power to infect when they dry out, and they dry out faster on porous surfaces like fabric. Soaps and detergents kill them just as well as disinfectants.

How and when to wear masks (this is opinion-, not evidence-based):

1. Wear masks when in public places, especially those where social distancing is difficult.
 - a. Stores and pharmacies.
 - b. Indoors at the gas station/convenience store.
 - c. Inside the restaurant when you pick up carry-out.
 - d. Church.
2. Don't wear masks while driving alone in your car.
3. Don't wear masks at home unless you are sick and others live with you.
4. Don't ask children less than 2 to wear them.

When going shopping consider these:

1. Coordinate your shopping so you do it all in one drive.
2. Put on your mask when you exit your vehicle to shop. Snug it over your nose.
3. Put on disposable plastic gloves before you enter the store.
4. If you have to inspect vegetables with your hand, do it by using the plastic vegetable bag inside out, not with your gloved hands.
5. Use credit cards, not cash which is hard to disinfect.
6. After you put bags back in your vehicle:
 - a. Take off and discard your gloves.
 - b. Take off the mask by grasping the backs of the earpieces or ties.
 - c. Place the mask in a small (#4) paper bag (paper, so it dries and doesn't touch anything else)
 - d. Apply hand sanitizer.
7. After your shopping trip, wash the mask and the clothing you wore at the hottest temperature allowed by the fabrics and dry at the hottest temperatures allowed.
8. Clothing worn while shopping can be washed with other clothing.