

Face Coverings in a Pandemic

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A face covering is a simple barrier placed over the face and nose. During an epidemic or a pandemic, such as the Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, there may be times when individuals or entire communities need to wear a face covering to control the spread of disease. Almost everyone who is 2 years and older can wear a mask. Some people who have severe lung disease cannot tolerate a mask. If a person cannot wear a mask a face shield will offer some limited protection.

How to wear your face covering¹



Instructions for proper mask placement:

- Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based (>60% ethanol) hand-sanitizer for at least 20 seconds prior to putting on, touching, adjusting or removing your face covering.
- Place the bands around your ears or secure on the back of your head.
- The top of the covering should fit securely over your nose, covering your entire nose, mouth and chin.
- There should not be gaps on the sides of your face. You can try putting a knot in the surgical mask elastic loops and tucking and flattening the extra material to get a better fit before putting it on.
- Avoid touching the front of the mask.

What face covering should I choose?

Wear the best quality mask that you are able to obtain. Better quality masks provide better protection against spread of disease. N95, KN95 and KF94 masks are now widely available and are very effective. Procedure masks, also called surgical masks, are also effective. Consider wearing a surgical mask with a cloth mask over it to give you better protection.

If you only have access to a cloth face covering, it should contain at least three layers of fabric, most commonly cotton and polyester/cotton blends. For help on choosing the right face mask for you, see <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-masks> or visit the CDC website at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>. People's faces differ in size and shape. Try to find the mask that gives you best fit and protection based on the placement guidelines above.



- Some people add a plastic mask fitter. It is like a frame and there are different shapes. You mold it to your face and strap it over a medical mask to help it seal better. Be sure to keep the fitter clean. For more on mask fitters see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>
- We discourage use of masks with an exhalation valve, as the virus may be able to leave or enter the mask and not be as effective at reducing the spread of COVID-19 to others.

How can I help my child wear a face covering?

- Always wear your face covering as you are your child's best role model.
- Put the mask on a stuffed toy to show the child how it works.
- Show your child pictures of other children wearing masks.
- Talk about being a super hero with a mask to protect others.
- Practice at home so your child gets used to wearing the mask. Give your child positive feedback.

Besides masking, what else can I do to stay healthy?

In addition to masking, you can use these basic public health measures to help control the spread of COVID-19 or other respiratory illnesses:

- Get vaccinated and boosted when eligible
- Clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based (>60% ethanol) hand sanitizer multiple times per day
- Follow social distancing (6 feet between people not in your household)
- Avoid touching your face or eyes with unwashed hands
- Stay away from those who are sick, unless you are their caregiver
- Stay home if you are sick
- Test for COVID-19 when appropriate. For more information about testing, visit the CDC site at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/diagnostic-testing.html>
- Free tests kits can be ordered at [COVIDtests.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/diagnostic-testing.html) (one set per residence)

Masks and Related Supplies

- Keep a spare mask available to replace one that is wet or damaged
- Store wet reusable masks in a plastic bag until they can be washed

Not everyone has access to face coverings, hand sanitizer or clean water. Your public health department, community healthcare center, or local hospital/clinic may be able to supply face coverings and related services. It is also anticipated that the

US government will be providing high quality masks for free.

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Face coverings should:

- Be high quality and effective, such as N95s and KN95s.
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured with head straps, ties or ear loop bands
- If made of cloth, they should be made of at least 3 layers of fabric.
- Allow for breathing without restriction

Ensure your cloth mask can:

- Be washed and dried without damage or changing its shape
- Be washed often with soap or detergent and preferably hot water, every day.
- Be changed if damp or soiled

Additional Information**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

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

World Health Organization

- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

JAMA: The Journal of the American Medical Association

- <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2765525>

AAP website Healthy Children.org

- <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

American Thoracic Society

- www.thoracic.org/patients/
 - COVID-19: How Do We Stay Safe?
 - What Are COVID-19 Vaccines?
 - How Vaccines Work to Prevent Infections

¹ <https://www.utsouthwestern.edu/covid-19/work-on-campus/masking.html>

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