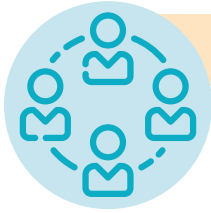




Choosing & Wearing Masks

During COVID-19



When should I wear a mask?

Masks should be worn any time you're around people who don't live in your household—whether you're inside, outside, out in public, or visiting someone at home. It's possible to spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms, and wearing a mask has been shown to significantly decrease the spread. Mask use remains very important, as the virus continues to change, and new strains may be even more contagious.

Wearing a mask when you're near other people is one of the easiest and most effective ways to protect your community. Even if you've received a vaccine, you should continue to wear a mask.



Choose

It's important to choose a mask that is comfortable and will stay in place so you won't be tempted to touch your face. Masks are important because people can carry and spread the virus without knowing. Masks act as a barrier to limit spread from people infected with the virus to others, and help protect the person wearing them.



Medical-grade masks such as N95s, FFP2s, and KN95s are the best option to protect yourself and others from airborne particles. While they were recommended only for health care workers early in the pandemic, they are becoming more widely available and offer the best protection. The mask should be tightly fitted to your face.



Surgical masks—those often worn by hospital staff—offer the next best protection. They are disposable and should be discarded after a single use.



Cloth masks with multiple layers are a good option for many people. They're easy to buy and are safe to clean and reuse. Cloth masks should be made with *at least two, but ideally three, layers of fabric.*

Certain types of masks should NOT be used:



N95 masks with air flow valves should *not* be used for COVID-19 protection. These masks do not prevent you from spreading the virus.

Single-layer cloth masks do *not* offer enough protection and *should be avoided.*



Wear

Putting it on:

- Make sure your mask is clean.**
- Wash your hands** before putting on the mask.
- Put on your mask so it covers your nose and mouth.** The fit should be snug so there's little to no gap between your face and the mask. You also want it to be comfortable, so you won't be tempted to touch it while you're out.

Note: Remember to follow safety guidelines even when you're wearing a mask. Stay 6 feet away from others when possible, wash your hands often, and don't touch your face.

Taking it off:

- Wash or sanitize your hands** before taking off your mask.
- Touch only the elastic or the cloth ties** of your mask when removing it. Don't touch the outside of the mask or your face during this step—it could be contaminated.
- Wash or sanitize your hands again** after taking off your mask.
- You can wash your cloth masks with your laundry.** Try to wash them after every wear, and make sure they're dry before you wear them again.

The above guidance was developed based on expert opinion and currently available information. Individual circumstances may affect mask choices.