

**TIPS TO WEAR MASKS COMFORTABLY TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS**

**Why is it important to wear a mask?**

Your mask acts as a kind of filter, creating a barrier and making it difficult for the virus to spread.

**When to wear a mask?**

- Outside your home, especially in places highly frequented by people who do not reside in your home.
- When you are at home with people who do not reside in your home.
- At home, if you or someone in your household develop symptoms or have been in close contact with a COVID-19 patient.
- The masks are not recommended for infants under 2 years of age and people with breathing difficulties.
- If you have been fully vaccinated (for over two weeks after your final dose), CDC says you can stop wearing a mask around members of another household who are also fully vaccinated. However, there are many new variants and unknowns and it is always safer with masks.



**What kind of mask should I choose?**

- Reusable cloth masks are better for the environment, but disposable masks may have more standardized filtration.
- Ideally, cloth masks should consist of at least 3 layers; it is recommended that the inner layer is made of an absorbent material such as cotton, an intermediate layer consisting of a filter, and the outer layer is made of a non-absorbent material, such as polyester.
- Make sure the mask does not expose your nose.
- Convex masks can be more comfortable than the flat ones, since they allow more space to breathe and talk.
- If you are in high-risk areas or you are at increased risk, use a single KN95 mask, or two masks at the same time. CDC recommends pairing a surgical mask inside with a cloth mask outside, well fitting without restricting breathing.
- Alternatively you may use a face shield over the mask(s) for additional protection.
- If you wear glasses, a mask with a wire bridge in the nose (e.g. surgical masks) can reduce fogging of the lenses.



**How To Pairing It Up**



Always pair a surgical and a cloth mask for double masking



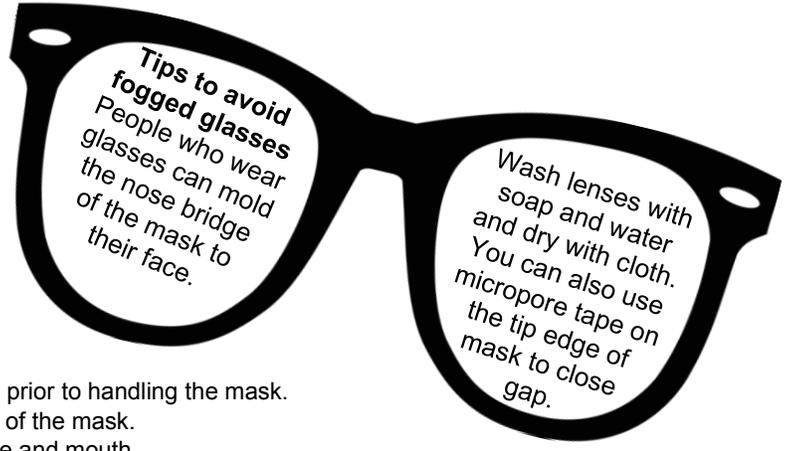
**Do not use**

- masks with valves, as they do not prevent the expulsion of droplets that can infect others.
- masks with transparent vinyl material, which can make breathing difficult.
- bandanas and scarves unless there are no alternatives.
- 2 disposable masks together.
- N95 masks or other devices that need to be prioritized for healthcare workers (unless you are one, or unless they are abundantly available); use KN95 instead.

**Where to find good masks**

Buy: Pharmacies, grocery stores, and some other stores carry masks. You can also find more varieties online.

Make: You can make your own mask from cloth, but avoid using materials like vinyl and plastic that can make breathing difficult.



**How to wear a mask correctly**

- Make sure your hands and the mask are clean prior to handling the mask.
- Touch only the borders, corners, elastic or ties of the mask.
- Make sure that the mask covers both your nose and mouth.
- Secure the mask using the elastic/ties.
- Once secured, press the nose bridge, if there is one, to tighten and fit.
- Make sure you have no difficulty breathing
- Do not put the mask around neck, forehead, head or let it dangle from one ear.
- Avoid touching the mask while wearing it.
- Change your mask if soiled or damp.

**Important:** Once you wear a mask, don't remove it unless you reach home or have a medical emergency. If you still need to touch it, make sure your hands are sanitized. If you need to set it aside for a while, keep it in a clean bag or container.



**How to adjust masks for a tighter fit:**

Tying a knot:

- 1) Fold the surgical mask in half, lengthwise.
- 2) Make a knot with each ear loop as close as possible to the corners of the mask.
- 3) Unfold the mask and adapt the flexible nose bridge to your nose.
- 4) Fold in the corners, adjusting as needed.

Note: Criss crossing ear loops actually enlarges the gaps on the sides. Refer to steps 1-4 to tie a knot instead.



If your ear loops are loose, you can use a clip to tighten, folding the ear strings and inserting them through the loop of the clip. Adjust the clip inwards or outwards to ensure a better fit. You can find the clips online on websites like Amazon or Etsy or you can improvise using other materials like beads.



**How to take off your mask**

- Untie the strings or stretch the ear loops, handling the mask only by the loops or ties. If the mask is disposable, do not reuse it. Discard it appropriately.
- For reusable cloth masks, fold it inside out and put in the wash.
- Wash your hands with soap and water.

**Where to store your mask**

- Store your masks in a clean, dry place (e.g., in a box or in a separate drawer) or hang them on hooks.
- When outside, you can store them in a paper or Ziplock bag instead of putting it directly in the purse or pocket where it can rip, get damp or contaminated.

**How to clean/wash and dry your mask**

- Washing: You can wash your fabric masks with your regular laundry using hot water. If washing by hand, use bleach containing 5.25%-8.25% sodium hypochlorite (e.g. Clorox) and mix 5 tablespoons per gallon of room temperature water, or 4 tablespoons in a quart of room temperature water. Soak the mask in the solution for 5 minutes, discard the solutions and rinse the mask with cool or room temperature water.
- Drying: Preferably air dry in direct sunlight or use the highest heat setting in the dryer.
- **Importantly, do not wash disposable masks** (e.g. surgical, N95, or KN95 masks).



**For more information, please visit:**

- <https://www.fau.edu/newsdesk/articles/efficacy-facemasks-coronavirus.php>
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>
- <https://www.today.com/health/how-make-mask-fit-better-how-wear-surgical-mask-t189236>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/effective-masks.html>

**How to make masks**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd19TbgVPAU&list=PLvvp9iOILTQZdKZTcAaYdyu4wKmhGCJNc&index=6&t=0s&ab\\_channel=CentersforDiseaseControlandPrevention%28CDC%29](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yd19TbgVPAU&list=PLvvp9iOILTQZdKZTcAaYdyu4wKmhGCJNc&index=6&t=0s&ab_channel=CentersforDiseaseControlandPrevention%28CDC%29)