



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

MENU >

How to Select, Wear, and Clean Your Mask

Updated Oct. 29, 2020 [Print](#)

CDC recommends that people wear masks in public settings, like on public and mass transportation, at events and gatherings, and anywhere they will be around other people.

Overview

- Wear masks with two or more layers to stop the spread of COVID-19
- Wear the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Masks should be worn by people two years and older
- Masks should NOT be worn by children younger than two, people who have trouble breathing, or people who cannot remove the mask without assistance
- Do NOT wear masks intended for healthcare workers, for example, N95 respirators
- CDC does not recommend the use of face shields alone. Evaluation of face shields is ongoing but effectiveness is unknown at this time.
- Evaluation of mask and gaiter materials and structure is ongoing.

How to Select

When selecting a mask, there are many choices. Here are some do's and don'ts.

DO choose masks that



Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric



Completely cover your nose and mouth



Fit snugly against the sides of your face and don't have gaps

DO NOT choose masks that



Are made of fabric that makes it hard to breathe, for example, vinyl



Have exhalation valves or vents, which allow virus particles to escape



Are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators or surgical masks



don't have gaps



respirators or surgical masks

Gaiters & Face Shields



Wear a gaiter with two layers, or fold it to make two layers



Caution: Evaluation is ongoing but effectiveness is unknown at this time

Special Situations: Children



If you are able, find a mask that is made for children



If you can't find a mask made for children, check to be sure the mask fits snugly over the nose and mouth and under the chin

Special Situations: Glasses



If you wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or one that has a nose wire to limit fogging



Do NOT put on children younger than 2 years old

How to Wear

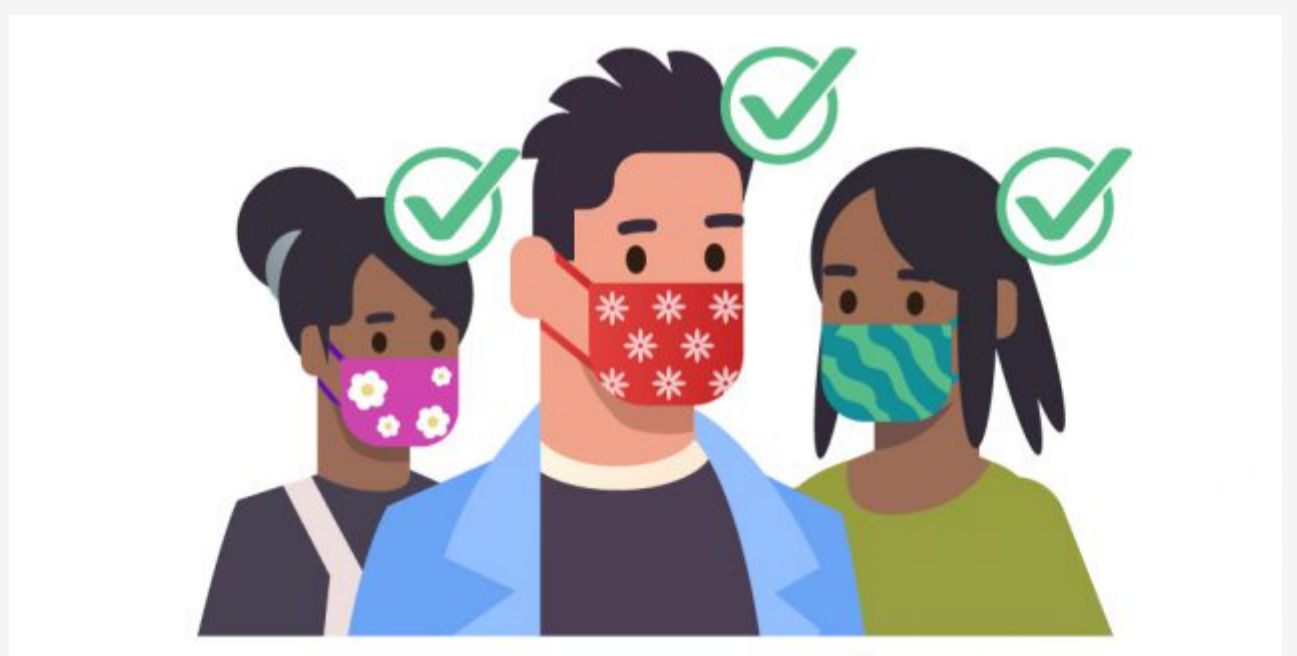
Wear a mask **correctly** and **consistently** for the best protection.

- Be sure to wash your hands before putting on a mask
- Do **NOT** touch the mask when wearing it

Do wear a mask that

- Covers your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin
- Fits snugly against the sides of your face

For more information, visit our [How to Wear Masks](#) web page.



How NOT to wear a mask

How NOT to wear a mask



Around your neck



On your forehead



Under your nose



Only on your nose



On your chin



Dangling from one ear



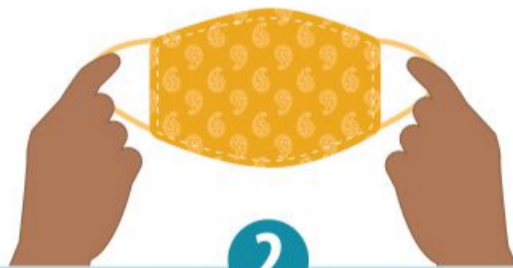
On your arm

How to take off a mask

How to take off a mask



1
Carefully, untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops



2
Handle only by the ear loops or ties



3
Fold outside corners together



4
Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing

How to Clean

Masks should be washed regularly. Always [remove masks correctly](#) and [wash your hands](#) after handling or touching a used mask.

- Include your mask with your regular laundry
- Use regular laundry detergent and the warmest appropriate water setting for the cloth used to make the mask
- Use the highest heat setting and leave in the dryer until completely dry

For more information, visit our [How to Wash Masks](#) web page.



For more information, see our [Masks](#) web site. For information on the sources for our mask guidance, see [Recent Studies](#).

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