

HOMEMADE FACE MASKS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 by asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic individuals, [the CDC](#) now advises individuals to wear homemade cloth face masks while in public spaces such as supermarkets and pharmacies, especially in geographic areas of high risk.

I What is a homemade face mask?

A homemade face mask, or face covering, is composed of two layers of cotton that cover the mouth and nose. It can be as simple as a scarf with elastic ties. [A link to how to make a homemade mask can be found here.](#)

I Is a face mask the same as a respirator?

Homemade cotton or purchased paper face masks are not respirators. They will not provide the same level of protection as an N95 respirator or a surgical mask, but they may help to reduce the transmission of the virus from an infected person to a non-infected person. They are not intended for use in the healthcare setting.

I Why is the CDC recommending cloth face coverings instead of medical grade facemasks?

Surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply and should be reserved for healthcare workers or other medical first responders, as recommended by CDC guidance.

I How do face masks work?

Face masks help prevent the spray or mist that is naturally expelled from the nose or mouth from getting on other people or surfaces. The mask should completely cover your nose and mouth.

I How do I care for my face mask?

Face masks can spread germs if they are placed on objects and handled by others. [Cloth face masks](#) should be hand-cleaned or laundered daily and thoroughly dried. Place them in a small bag when they are not in use. A paper bag is preferred because they breathe and will help dry out the mask. Plastic bags can be used for clean masks or used masks when paper bags are not available. Don't share masks with others unless they have been laundered and thoroughly dried.

I Are face masks a safe alternative to social distancing?

No. Face masks do not replace the need for social distancing. They may help reduce the spread of the virus when you are away from your home to do shopping and when avoiding other people is difficult.

I Do I need to wash my hands more often if I am using a face mask?

Yes. Wearing a face mask may encourage you to touch your face more often. You should wash your hands any time you touch your face or adjust the mask.

I Who should not wear cloth face masks?

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.

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