




Masking Best Practices

Dallas County Public Health Committee

February 2021



Masks are key to preventing transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. Masks should be used as critical part of a comprehensive **‘Do it all!’** approach including but not limited to physical distancing, avoiding crowded, closed and close-contact settings, good ventilation, cleaning hands, and covering sneezes and coughs. Masks are not a substitute for physical distancing.

Depending on the type of masks, masks can prevent spread from an infected person, protect the wearer, and provide protection to both. Masks save lives by preventing spread of COVID-19.

When and where to wear your mask:

Masks should be worn in public and any setting including in the home if you are around people outside your immediate household. Masks can be used safely in individuals over the age of 2.

Fit is Key: How to choose and wear masks

- Mask fit is essential. The mask must completely cover your mouth and nose. **Medical masks such as surgical masks and fabric masks** can be used by the general public based on availability. Masks that are fitted around the face filter air and air particles better. Masks with ear loops or ties and wire nose guidewires improve fit.
- Do not use masks with exhalation valves.
- Put on and remove the mask properly, and avoid touching the front of the mask and instead use the ear loops or ties to remove.
- Medical masks with non-woven polypropylene material have electrostatic qualities that prevent virus attaching.
- The quality of the mask material is more important than the number of fabric layers. In general, at least two layers of tightly woven is preferred to provide a better filter. Ways to do this include:
 - Add a layer of nylon stocking over another masks to improve filtering and the fit. See graphic on page 5.
 - Wear an additional mask to improve fit and a better filter, especially if the second mask ensures proper fit.
- Do not use a scarf as a mask. In case of cold weather or other preference, a scarf should be worn on top of the mask.

Mask Maintenance: Keeping it Clean

- If you use a fabric mask, wash and dry it properly after every use.
- If the mask becomes damp or dirty, change to another mask. Dampness decreases the ability of the mask to filter.
- Disposable masks are not intended for repeat use. Discard after single use.
- Once you put on a properly fitted mask, avoid touching or readjusting it. If you must touch your mask, wash your hands afterwards.

Wearing a mask that fits tightly to your face can help limit spread of the virus that causes COVID-19

In lab tests with dummies, exposure to potentially infectious aerosols decreased by **about 95%** when they both wore tightly fitted masks



Cloth mask over medical procedure mask



Medical procedure mask with knotted ear loops and tucked-in sides

Other effective options to improve fit include:



Mask fitter



Nylon covering over mask

References:

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7007e1.htm?s_cid=mm7007e1_e&ACSTrackingID=USCDC_921-DM49152&ACSTrackingLabel=MMWR%20Early%20Release%20-%20Vol.%2070%2C%20February%2010%2C%202021&deliveryName=USCDC_921-DM49152

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/types-of-masks.html>

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