Your Guide to Masks

CDC recommends that people wear masks in public settings, at events and gatherings, and anywhere they will be around other people. Effective February 2, 2021, masks are required on planes, buses, trains, and other forms of public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States and in U.S. transportation hubs such as airports and stations.

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
- Have a nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask

**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 prioritized for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators
Special Considerations

Gaiters & face shields

| Wear a gaiter with two layers, or fold it to make two layers | Not recommended: Evaluation of face shields is ongoing, but effectiveness is unknown at this time. |

Children

| Find a mask that is made for children to help ensure proper fit | Check to be sure the mask fits snugly over the nose and mouth and under the chin and that there are no gaps around the sides | Do NOT put on children younger than 2 years old |

Cold weather gear

| Wear your scarf, ski mask or balaclava over your mask | Scarves, ski masks and balaclavas are not substitutes for masks |

People with beards

Certain types of facial hair, like beards, can make mask fitting difficult. Masks that fit well protect you better. To have a better fit, people with beards can shave their beards or trim their beards close to the face.

Other ways to improve fit
For people with beards that are not trimmed close to the face, masks may fit loosely around the beard. However, people with beards should still wear a mask. Masks designed for people with beards are being evaluated, and information will be provided when it becomes available.

For more information on evidence for effectiveness of masks, other types of face protection, and mask alternatives, see Guidance for Wearing Masks

How to Wear

Wear a mask correctly and consistently for the best protection.

- Be sure to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on a mask.
- Do NOT touch the mask when wearing it. If you have to often touch/adjust your mask, it doesn't fit you properly, and you may need to find a different mask or make adjustments.

For more information, visit our How to Wear Masks web page.
Do wear a mask that

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

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

1. Carefully, untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
2. Handle only by the ear loops or ties
3. Fold the 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

Reusable 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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