Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

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How to Select, Wear, and Clean Your Mask

Updated Nov. 27, 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

DO

- Wear masks to help protect yourself from getting or spreading COVID-19
- 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

DO NOT

- Put masks on someone two years and younger
- Put masks on people who have trouble breathing, or people who cannot remove the mask without assistance
- Wear masks intended for healthcare workers, for example, N95 respirators

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

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: Glasses

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

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

Do NOT put on children younger than 2 years old

How to Wear

Wear a mask **correctly** and **consistently** to help keep from getting or spreading the virus.

- 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

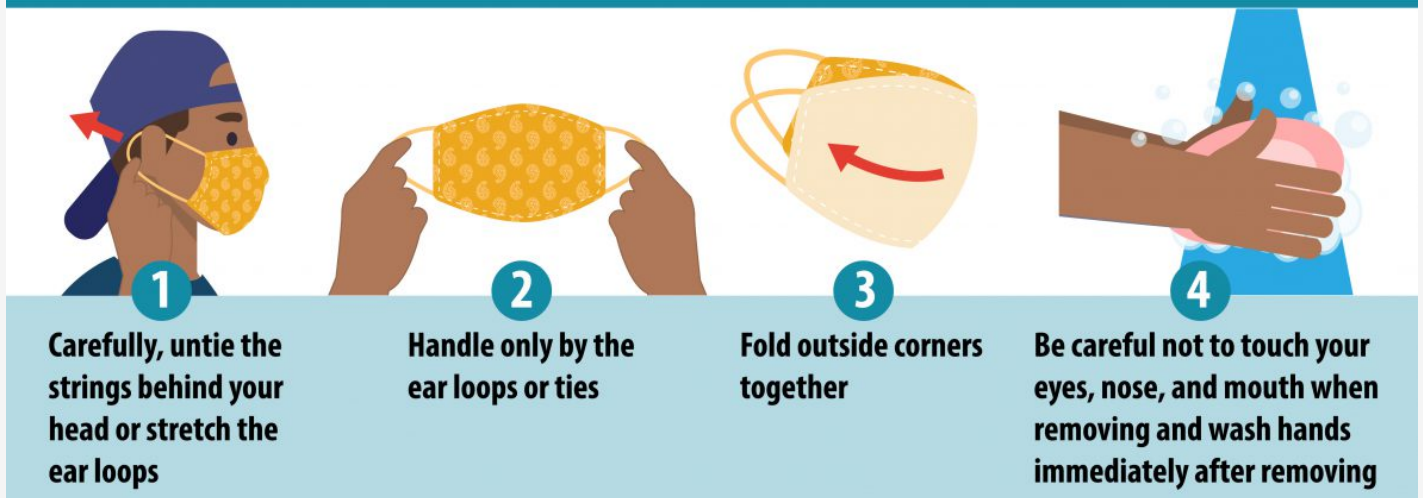On your forehead

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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