

## FACTSHEET on FABRIC FACEMASKS: CORRECT USE & PRODUCTION

5 November 2020

One of the mainways that coronavirus spreads is through respiratory droplets that people expel when they talk, sing, cough or sneeze. The virus can be spread by people not showing symptoms too, meaning some people can be contagious and not even realize it. By wearing masks, you can reduce both your chances of having the virus enter your body through your nose and mouth, as well as decrease the chances of spreading the virus to others.

This is why it is important to wear masks in public and when around people who don't live in your household. Masks should also be worn if you are self-isolating or self-quarantining at home and have elderly or other vulnerable people living with you. Elderly and vulnerable people should also wear masks when in contact with people.

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

### How to select a fabric (non-medical) mask:

- Choose masks that have two or three layers of washable, breathable material.
- Choose masks that fit across your face without any gaps (if you wear glasses get a mask that fits securely across your nose to avoid fogging)
- If you are elderly or have other medical conditions you are advised to wear a medical mask (flat disposable mask also known as surgical mask) when in public if you have one available. If not, then use a fabric mask.
- Do NOT wear masks intended for healthcare workers, for example, N95 masks and other respirators. They are not designed for interactions in public

and by purchasing them, you reduce their availability to the health workers who really need them.

### How to wear a mask:

- Be sure to wash your hands with soap before putting on a mask
- Check the mask to make sure it is not dirty or damaged
- Put on the mask by picking up the loops without touching the front of the mask
- Completely cover your nose and mouth
- Adjust the mask leaving no gaps on the sides and chin



### How to remove a mask:

- Be sure to wash your hands with soap before taking off a mask
- Remove the loops from behind your ears without touching the front of the mask
- Wash your hands after taking off the mask

### How to make your own fabric masks

- Choose fabric materials that capture particles and droplets but remain easy to breathe through.
- Avoid stretchy material for making masks as they provide lower filtration efficiency during use and are sensitive to washing at high temperatures. Fabrics that can be washed at high temperatures (over 60°C) are preferable.
- If possible, combine three layers made up of:

1. an inner layer of absorbent material such as cotton to readily absorb droplets
2. a middle layer of non-woven material such as polypropylene
3. an outer layer of non-absorbent material, such as polyester or polyester blend

### **Wearing masks by children**

**Children aged 5 years and under** should not be required to wear masks. This is based on the safety and overall interest of the child and the ability of the child to safely and appropriately use a mask. However, there may be local requirements, or times when mask is necessary.

**Children aged 12 and over** should wear a mask under the same conditions as adults, in particular, when they are in contact with others, and there is widespread transmission in the area.

As for **children aged 6-11 years**, WHO and UNICEF advise that the decision should be made based on the following:

- Whether there is widespread transmission in the area where the child resides
- The ability of the child to safely and appropriately use a mask
- Access to masks, as well as laundering and replacement of masks in certain settings (such as schools and childcare services)
- Adequate adult supervision and instructions to the child on how to put on, take off and safely wear masks
- Potential impact of wearing a mask on learning and psychosocial development, in consultation with teachers, parents/caregivers and/or medical providers
- Specific settings and interactions the child has with other people who are at

high risk of developing serious illness, such as the elderly and those with other underlying health conditions

For children with developmental disorders or disabilities, masks should not be mandatory and assessed on a case by case basis in the interest of the child.

Children should not wear a mask when playing sports such as running, jumping or playing on the playground, so that it doesn't compromise their breathing.

### **Masks maintenance:**

- Masks should only be used by one person. Do not share a mask with others to avoid transmission of germs from one person to the other.
- Talk through the mask (do not pull down your mask when speaking).
- All masks should be changed if soiled or wet; a soiled or wet mask should not be worn for an extended period of time.
- Fabric Masks should be washed frequently and handled carefully, so as not to contaminate other items. Wash it with soap/detergent and water, preferably at high temperature after each day of use.
- If the layers of fabrics look noticeably worn out, discard the mask.
- Do not reuse disposable masks

### **Other measures of self-protection:**

Masks alone do not guarantee protection.

For the best protection, remember to also wash your hands frequently with soap for 40 seconds, and keep a physical distance of at least 1 meter from others when in public.

If you develop symptoms such as cough, runny nose, fever and muscle aches call the hotline in your country, if available, for directions on where to go for care.

## References for further reading:

**WHO: Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public: When and how to use masks**

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

**UNICEF: COVID-19 and masks. Tips for families What to know about masks and how to introduce them to your family**

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-and-masks-tips-families>

**CDC: How to select, wear and clean your mask; how to wear cloth face coverings**

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

**WHO: Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID**

[https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)

**WHO: Children and masks related to COVID**

<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-children-and-masks-related-to-covid-19>

**AU infographic: Community use of face masks**

<https://africacdc.org/download/community-use-of-face-masks/>

**WHO infographic: How to wear a non-medical fabric mask safely “Do’s”**

[https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/clothing-masks-infographic--web---part-1.png?sfvrsn=679fb6f1\\_26](https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/clothing-masks-infographic--web---part-1.png?sfvrsn=679fb6f1_26)

**WHO infographic: How to wear a non-medical fabric mask safely “Don’ts”**

[https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/clothing-masks-infographic---web---part-2.png?sfvrsn=d7b0f88d\\_20](https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/clothing-masks-infographic---web---part-2.png?sfvrsn=d7b0f88d_20)

**WHO infographic: How to wear a non-medical fabric mask safely “Do’s and Don’ts”**

[https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/clothing-masks-infographic---\(web\)-logo-who.png?sfvrsn=b15e3742\\_16](https://www.who.int/images/default-source/health-topics/coronavirus/clothing-masks-infographic---(web)-logo-who.png?sfvrsn=b15e3742_16)