

# Using a Fabric Facemask

It is not mandatory however, it is thought that homemade masks that are made appropriately, could reduce the risk of spread from employees to the people we support and co-workers.

You can choose to use a homemade mask at work when no one is symptomatic, if someone becomes symptomatic you must wear appropriate PPE based on the guidelines provided.

## How to put a homemade mask on and take one off

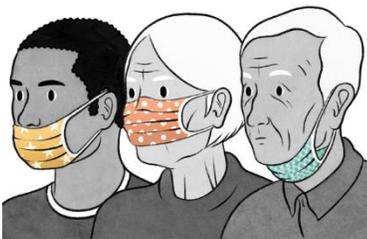
Always wash your hands first. Don't touch the fabric part of the mask — that's essentially the germ filter, and you don't want to spread whatever germs it has trapped. Use the ear loops or ties to secure your mask and to remove it. The coverage area should go from near the bridge of your nose to down under your chin and stretch about halfway or more toward your ears. Pull the ties and loops so that it fits as snugly as possible against your face.

If you are taking your mask off during your shift for breaks, carefully remove using the ties/ear loops and lay it contaminated side down on a paper towel. Avoid anything that may get germs on the inside area of the mask. Throw the paper towel afterwards and wash your hands.

Take your mask home for laundering in a sealable bag.

## Don't try to cheat the mask

The writer Peter Hessler, who recently wrote about life in lockdown in China for The New Yorker, created names for the various ways in which people take breaks from masks while wearing them as a way to explain the right and wrong ways to wear a mask to his daughters. The "holster" is a mask pulled down and resting on the neck. The "flap jack" happens when a person takes one ear loop off to talk on the phone. And then there's the "low rider." "This is when you pretend that you are obeying the rules, but actually tug the mask down so that your nostrils are uncovered," he said. All can make the mask far less effective in protecting against germs.



How NOT to Wear a Mask

## The risk of wearing a mask

In theory, fidgeting with a mask could introduce germs to your face, but if you're touching your face that much, you are greatly increasing the risk of getting sick anyway.

But the real worry about wearing a mask is that you start to believe it's protecting you more than it really is. Behavioral economists know that when people begin to feel safe, they take more risks. It's a phenomenon seen when federal regulations first made cars safer with added features like seatbelts, and people responded by driving more recklessly. When doctors wear decontamination gowns, studies show they may become more lax about safety protocols. When communities in Mexico began outdoor mosquito spraying to combat dengue fever, families were less likely to adopt personal prevention practices.

Masks do make us feel safer, but any benefit of wearing a mask will be quickly negated if we lose our resolve about social distancing and hand washing. Don't start lingering in grocery stores or spending time with friends because you are wearing a mask. A mask alone will not protect you from the coronavirus.

### **How do I care for my fabric mask?**

Wash mask in a washing machine. The wash water should be greater than 28 degrees Celsius. If a washing machine has a sanitize cycle, this would be best. Steam cycles are typically 30-40 degrees Celsius which would be perfect.

Time in the wash and soap cycle is an important factor. COVID-19 virus has an outer lipid layer that will break down with soap and friction. The prolonged friction with soap breaks down and dissolves the outer lipid layer and kills the virus.

The C.D.C. says fabric masks should be "washed routinely." The mask experts I spoke with wash theirs daily in a machine or a sink, just using regular laundry soap. You can use the dryer or let it air dry. Although it's not necessary, you can also go over it with a hot iron for a full assault on any germs that might remain.

Just as with a medical mask, chemicals like bleach or hydrogen peroxide will begin to degrade the fabric fibers, making the mask less effective. Dr. Marr notes that a virus can't replicate outside the body, and if virus particles have been trapped by the mask, they are pretty well stuck there and will decay or be removed during washing.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/10/well/live/coronavirus-face-masks-guides-protection-personal-protective-equipment.html>