

**What You Need To Know About Masks  
and Other Face Coverings  
Black Coalition Against COVID  
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**1. There are three types of masks:**

- **Respirator masks (sometimes called an N95 mask). These still remain in short supply and should be reserved for healthcare workers and other professionals who are risking their lives every day caring for very ill and contagious people**
- **Medical face masks (also called surgical or procedure masks). These are also used by healthcare workers and sometimes members of the public who are sick or caring for those who are at-risk**
- **Non-medical masks and face coverings (such as homemade masks, store-bought fabric masks, etc.). These are the masks that are the subject of this guidance**

**2. Why is mask wearing important?**

- **COVID-19 is not only highly contagious but it is extremely sneaky. It can be transmitted from person to person fairly easily through actions such as talking, coughing, sneezing, and touching contaminated surfaces followed by touching areas around your face**
- **It is important for everyone to know that even people who do not appear to be sick, who have no symptoms, can be carriers of this virus and can infect others**
- **It is important to understand that when we speak to others, or cough, the virus can spread many feet into the air and that is why**

**the rules about social distancing are so important, combined with using a face covering**

- **It is important to know that even when you wear a mask, you still should follow the guidance about staying at home, social distancing and hand washing. All of these interventions work together to keep you, and all of us, safe. If you find yourself in an environment where you cannot temporarily maintain social distance, then ABSOLUTELY be sure to wear a covering!**
- **Remember that the mask or face covering is to protect you from others but also to protect others from you...we should never forget our responsibility to protect the lives of our families, friends and neighbors: we are all in this together so don't be selfish!**

### **3. How should I wear a mask or face covering?**



**Your face coverings should:**

- **Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face**
- **Be secured with ties or ear loops**
- **Include multiple layers of fabric**
- **Allow for breathing without restriction**
- **Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape**

**4. Who should NOT wear a face covering?**

- **Children under two**
- **Those persons with breathing difficulties**
- **Persons who are unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance**

**5. What kind of material can a home fashioned mask be made from?**

- **Cloth face coverings fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost such as a bandana or an old cloth tee shirt**

**6. How should I put on a face covering?**

- **Before putting your mask on you should wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, then inspect it before each use for holes or tears**

- **Avoid touching the mask while using it and, if you do, wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub...remember what its for: to catch the invisible viral particles**

## **7. How should I remove a face covering?**

- **Removing a mask should be done from behind and please don't touch the front of the mask**
- **You should be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth when removing your face covering and remember to wash your hands immediately after removing because you should assume that it did its job, which is to collect these invisible viral particles and keep them away from coming into you**
- **When you remove a used covering, store it separately in a plastic bag until laundered...you don't want to contaminate your home with a soiled mask!**
- **Please be a good neighbor and dispose of dirty masks in a sealed plastic bag...we need to respect the people who handle our trash and clean our streets**
- **After disposing, remember to wash your hands with soap and water again**

## **8. How should I wash a face covering?**

- **According to the CDC, there aren't any hard and fast rules regarding how often you should wash face masks but common sense suggests that face coverings should be routinely cleaned after every use**
- **One expert suggests that, lacking available data to suggest otherwise, changing out or laundering a cloth mask should follow the same routine as underwear: change them daily and when soiled**

- **A washing machine with hot water and regular detergent followed by tumble drying on high heat should suffice in properly washing a face covering**
- **Some experts suggest that delicate masks that are hand-sewn may need to be washed by hand. If so, lather masks with soap and scrub them for at least 20 seconds with warm to hot water before tossing in the dryer. For peace of mind, some also suggest ironing masks on the cotton or linen setting to kill any remaining germs.**
- **If you do not have a washing machine handy or cant get to the laundromat consider one of these options:**
  - **Disinfecting your covering for an hour in a bowl with one part bleach in three to four parts water, then rinse them and hang them to dry**
  - **Soak it in 75% ethyl alcohol and let dry**
  - **Wipe down the mask with bleach in side and out**
  - **Soak in boiling water with soap**
- **You might want to have a few face coverings on hand so that you can change them out as needed.**

## **9. Can UV Light Be Used To Disinfect A Face Covering?**

- **There are no studies that we are aware of that demonstrate the use of household available UV light emitting products in cleaning face masks.**
- **Some hospitals have recently constructed special UV decontamination rooms that, under very controlled conditions, use intense UV light to decontaminate hospital grade masks.**

- **It is doubtful that you could safely reproduce these conditions at home, or whether the effort would be justified for the few masks that an individual or family would need to treat. We suggest you use the much more accessible and practical procedures noted above.**

## **10. How Long Will Coronavirus Survive on Surfaces?**

- **The virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is stable for several hours to days in aerosols and on surfaces, according to a new study from National Institutes of Health, CDC, UCLA and Princeton University scientists in The New England Journal of Medicine.**
  - **In aerosols for up to three hours**
  - **Glass: 5 days.**
  - **Wood: 4 days.**
  - **Plastic & stainless-steel: 2-3 days.**
  - **Cardboard: 24 hours.**
  - **Copper surfaces: 4 hours.**