

“Everyone Gets a Mask!” Team Project

**Instructions for Wearers of Homemade Cloth Masks -
Healthcare Workers or General Public**

Last updated: April 14, 2020

Note: The on-line version of this document at www.webility.md/masks has active hyperlinks for web access. Other project resource files are also there. Send comments to masks@webility.md.

You now should now have one or more protective cloth masks – or covers for N95 respirator masks – that were made by a local team participating in the nationwide “Everyone Gets a Mask!” Team Project. We are glad you are willing to wear a homemade cloth mask during the COVID-19 pandemic. Masks work two ways – helping protect you from exposure, and protecting others in our community.

If you know another local group that might like to participate in this effort to rapidly make and distribute high quality cloth face masks as widely as possible, please contact us for more information at LetsMakeMasks@webility.md or see the website www.webility.md/masks.

Please remember: Homemade cloth masks are not the best protection against exposure to the coronavirus, but at least for now they are the best solution for most of us who are not providing patient care. Commercially manufactured and FDA-approved surgical masks or N-95 respirator masks are much more effective, but in extremely short supply. Manufacturers around the country are rapidly stepping up production of those higher quality masks but it will take several weeks or much longer before enough are available to meet demand. Once commercially manufactured and FDA-approved masks are available, plan to switch and stop using your cloth masks.

In the meantime, a well-made, well-fitted homemade cloth mask made of tightly-woven fabric can block most respiratory droplets. This is much better than having no protection at all! The key is in the fit at the nose and sides. The mask should fit snugly but comfortably, covering both the nose and mouth, while minimizing air leaks at the bridge of the nose and the sides.

The United States CDC’s guidance on homemade cloth masks FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS states “...when facemasks are worn properly, [they] protect the wearer from splashes and sprays.... [and] help to block the respiratory secretions/ droplets produced by the wearer from contaminating other persons and surfaces.” www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html Homemade masks should ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face”. www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/face-masks.html

If you are not a healthcare worker, the face shield is unlikely to be practical or needed in addition to the mask.

General Instructions For Use:

These recommendations are based on the references and links provided below.

- Do not share homemade cloth masks (or covers for N95 masks) with other people unless you work for an organization that will be laundering / sterilizing them between each use.
- Write your name on your mask with a marker to be sure no one else uses it by mistake.
- Avoid contaminating the mask or yourself or others when putting on or taking off the mask. Follow the Step by Step Guide below, or the method prescribed by the place you work or recommended by the CDC.
- Store and transport your masks separately from other items -- in a clean paper bag with your name on it.

Step-By-Step Guide To Putting On, Removing And Laundering Homemade Face Masks

Putting on a homemade cloth mask. Don't contaminate it, make sure front faces out!

1. Decontaminate your hands before touching mask. Wash with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
2. Inspect mask, especially attachment between mask and ties /ear loops. Discard if attachment is weak or if there are obvious tears or holes anywhere.
3. Decide which edge of the mask is the top. Is it marked "top"? Does one edge have a stiff bendable portion? If so, that is the top which will be adjusted to fit snug across your nose.
4. Decide which side of the mask is the front (faces out). If the two sides look different, the patterned/colored side is the front and the plain/white side is the back (touches your skin).
5. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using. This may either be a rectangular pleated mask or a curved fitted mask.
 - **Face mask with cloth ties:**
 - Pick up and hold the mask at the top corners or by the nosepiece with the front facing out and the top facing up.
 - Bring the mask to your nose level and slide your hands along the top two ties until they are taut.
 - Place the top ties over the crown of your head and secure behind with a tight bow.
 - Take the bottom two ties, one in each hand, and secure with a tight bow at the nape of your neck.
 - See this video. The demonstration begins at minute 1.55:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=9VbojLOQe94

- **Face mask with elastic ear loops:**
 - Pick up and hold the mask by the ear loops.
 - Place a loop around each ear.
 - See this video. Note: it shows you the wrong way first, and then the correct way: www.youtube.com/watch?v=OABvzu9e-hw
6. If there is stiffening material (typically an embedded wire) along the top edge, mold or pinch to the shape of your nose so the mask fits tightly.
 7. Pull the bottom of the mask down to cover your mouth and chin. Bottom edge should be tucked under your chin.

Taking off a homemade face mask: Don't let surface contaminants get on your hands or face!

1. Remove gloves if wearing. Decontaminate your hands before touching mask. Wash with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
2. Avoid touching the cloth of the mask itself because contamination is heaviest there. Only touch the fasteners: the ties / ear loops / head band.
3. Follow the removal instructions below for the type of mask you are using.
 - **Face mask with ties:**
 - Untie the bottom bow first and let the ties drop.
 - Then untie the top bow and hold the string ends in your hands while you pull the mask up and away from you.
 - **Face mask with ear loops:**
 - With your fingers, reach behind one or both ears and grasp the ear loops.
 - Continuing to hold the mask by a loop, remove the mask.
4. Immediately place the soiled mask in the proper receptacle to prevent contamination of any other surfaces or containers.
 - If the mask is visibly soiled with blood, mucous, dirt or any other body fluids, protocols usually call for mask disposal rather than laundering.
 - If the mask will be laundered by the place where you are working (hospital, clinic or other organization), follow their protocol for dirty masks.
5. If you are going to launder the mask at home:
 - If possible spray both sides until damp with 3% hydrogen peroxide solution (available in grocery or drug stores)
 - Put mask in a closed plastic bag until you get it home to wash.
 - See instructions below for home disinfection and laundering.
6. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer when done.

Home disinfection and laundering of homemade cloth masks:

1. If hand laundering, prepare soaking solution ahead of time to disinfect masks. This is a mixture of room temperature tap water and a little bit of household bleach. Use the recipe below which is strong enough to disinfect but not so strong it will damage the cloth.

Remember that Clorox II and other color-safe whiteners ARE NOT BLEACH!

NOTE: The solution loses effectiveness after two days, so you will have to make more of it regularly. Store away from children and pets.

<u>Household Bleach</u>	<u>Water (room temperature)</u>
4 T (tablespoons)	1 quart
1/4 cup or 8 T (tablespoons)	1/2 gallon (=2 quarts)
1/2 cup	1 gallon

2. To disinfect and launder masks by hand:
 - Put on nitrile or rubber dishwashing gloves to protect yourself from the bleach, and remember bleach will remove color from fabrics!
 - Remove mask(s) from the transport bag, discard the bag in the trash.
 - Submerge mask(s) in the bleach solution described above for 20 minutes. When done, wring out the bleach under running water so there is less to remove in the next step.
 - Submerge mask in a basin of hot soapy water, and rub mask fabric together to remove any dirt or facial oils from the mask.
 - Rinse thoroughly in tap water, wring out, and hang to dry (or put in hot dryer) until mask is thoroughly dried for next use.
3. To disinfect and launder masks in washing machine:
 - Launder with detergent, hot water, and household bleach per instructions on bleach bottle.
 - Wash hands with soap and water (or hand sanitizer) after loading washing machine.
 - Dry on hot cycle.

Reference Sources for Protection Protocols:

CDC may start recommending general public wear masks:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/health/cdc-masks-coronavirus.html>

<https://apple.news/AL8F0k2PITHmv8T-l1lbUSQ>

The instructions above for putting on and taking off masks were adapted for clarity from the website from the San Francisco Department of Public Health:

<https://www.sfchcp.org/communicable-disease/healthy-habits/how-to-put-on-and-remove-a-face-mask/>

Guidance on wearing and removing respiratory protection from CDC:

How to put on a Disposable Respirator: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-133/pdfs/2010-133.pdf>

Guidance on disinfecting solutions from CDC:

Recommended Guidance for Extended Use and Limited Reuse of N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators in Healthcare Settings:

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hcwcontrols/recommendedguidanceextuse.html>

Guidelines for Disinfection, pp 40-42 and 47

<https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/disinfection/>

Guidance from CDC for household members, intimate partners, and caregivers of a person diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19 in a nonhealthcare setting

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-prevent-spread.html>