# Live Well, Work Well

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## CDC CONSIDERATIONS FOR WEARING MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided the following information on face coverings.

*This article compiles important information from the CDC. Visit www.cdc.gov/covid-19 for more information.*

### The Importance of Masks

The CDC recently updated its guidance on the effectiveness of cloth masks to include protection for the wearer of the mask, in addition to helping prevent the spread of COVID-19. Individual prevention benefits increase when higher numbers of people use masks consistently and correctly—which benefits an entire community.

Masks create a barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from reaching others. It is important to wear a mask when unable to stay at least 6 feet apart from others, because COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another.

### The Evidence for Effectiveness

According to the CDC's scientific brief, studies demonstrate that wearing a cloth mask can offer protection from contracting SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

The CDC continues to monitor ongoing studies of the effectiveness of mask-wearing, cautioning that further research is needed to expand the evidence base for cloth masks' protective effect, including studies that evaluate the effectiveness of different types of masks and combinations of materials.

Current CDC guidance remains that community use of masks can help avoid future lockdowns, especially if combined with other measures such as social distancing and hand-washing.

Keep in mind that wearing a mask does not raise the carbon dioxide level in the air one breathes. A cloth mask does not provide an airtight fit across the face. Therefore, carbon dioxide escapes through breathing or talking. Additionally, carbon dioxide particles are small enough to easily pass through any cloth mask material. In contrast, COVID-19 respiratory droplets are much larger than carbon dioxide particles, so they cannot pass as easily through a properly designed and properly worn cloth mask.

### Who Should Wear Masks?

The CDC recommends all people ages 2 years and older wear a mask in public settings and when around people who don't live in their household. This is especially important when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.

While masks are strongly encouraged to reduce the spread of COVID-19, the CDC recognizes there are

specific instances when wearing a mask may not be feasible. In these instances, adaptations and alternatives should be considered whenever possible.

Masks should **not** be worn by children under the age of 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

### Wearing a Mask

The purpose of masks is to keep respiratory droplets from reaching others and to aid with source control. Studies prove that a cloth mask provides protection to you, along with protection for those around you when worn properly. The mask should be worn over the nose and mouth, and secured under the chin. It should also fit snuggly against the sides of the face so there aren't any gaps.

The CDC has issued a step-by-step guide on how to properly wear masks in public, along with storing and washing them properly. Please follow guidance provided on the CDC website for best practices to stay safe while wearing a face mask.

The CDC recommends wearing masks with two or more layers to stop the spread of COVID-19. Opt for cloth masks that can be washed or nonmedical-grade disposable masks that cover the mouth and nose. Do **not** purchase N95 or surgical masks, as those masks should be reserved for health care professionals.

The latest guidance from the CDC does **not** recommend the use of the following as a substitute for masks:

- **Masks with an exhalation valve or vent**—Masks with one-way valves or vents that allow exhalation through a hole in the material can result in respiratory droplets that reach others.
- **Clear plastic shields**—A face shield is primarily used for eye protection for the person wearing it. It is not known what level of protection a face shield provides from the spray of respiratory droplets from the wearer.

Evaluation is ongoing to test the effectiveness of mask substitutes, such as gaiters and face shields.

### For More Information

It is important to wear a mask when you are unable to stay at least 6 feet apart from others. The CDC will continue to update recommendations as new scientific evidence becomes available.

To learn more about evolving face-covering guidance from the CDC, click here. Please follow guidance provided by the CDC or your doctor.

*Source: CDC*