

CDC: Cloth Face Coverings: Questions and Answers

This document is intended to address frequently asked questions about cloth face coverings.

Why do you need to wear cloth face coverings?

In light of new data about [how COVID-19 spreads](#), along with evidence of widespread COVID-19 illness in communities across the country, CDC recommends that people wear a [cloth face covering](#) to cover their nose and mouth in the community setting. This is to protect people around you if you are infected but do not have symptoms.

When do you need to wear a cloth face covering?

A cloth face covering should be worn whenever people are in a community setting, especially in situations where you may be near people. These settings include grocery stores and pharmacies. These face coverings are not a substitute for social distancing. Cloth face coverings are especially important to wear in public in areas of widespread COVID-19 illness.

Do I still need to stay at least 6 feet away from people if wearing a cloth face covering?

Yes. Wearing cloth face coverings is an additional public health measure people should take to reduce the spread of COVID-19. CDC still recommends that you stay at least 6 feet away from other people (social distancing), frequent hand cleaning and other everyday preventive actions. A cloth face covering is not intended to protect the wearer, but it may prevent the spread of virus from the wearer to others. This would be especially important if someone is infected but does not have symptoms. View CDC's guidance on [how to protect yourself](#).

What type of cloth face covering should be worn?

Cloth face coverings can be made from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost.

Who should not wear cloth face coverings?

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children younger than 2 years of age, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.

Why is CDC recommending cloth face coverings instead of medical grade facemasks?

Surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply and should be reserved for healthcare workers or other medical first responders, as recommended by CDC guidance.

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Content source: [National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases \(NCIRD\)](#), [Division of Viral Diseases](#)