

# HOW TO EFFECTIVELY WEAR AND HANDLE A MASK



Wearing a mask or face covering or face shield attachment in public and in high-traffic areas like grocery stores and pharmacies can help prevent new cases of COVID-19. Masks and face coverings prevent the person wearing the mask from spreading respiratory droplets when talking, sneezing, singing or coughing. These droplets are the main ways that COVID-19 spreads, so effective mask use is key in fighting COVID-19.

**THESE ARE SOME TIPS ON HOW TO EFFECTIVELY WEAR  
AND HANDLE A MASK OR FACE COVERING.**



WHITMAN-WALKER HEALTH

*We see you.*



## USE OF A DISPOSABLE FACE MASK

It's important to practice good hand hygiene before touching your mask - whether it's disposable or reusable.

- › Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and dry your hands completely.
- › If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for at least 20 seconds. If your hands are dry before 20 seconds have passed, you have not used enough hand sanitizer to effectively clean your hands. If your hands are visibly soiled, soap and water are a must!
- › When using hand sanitizer, keep rubbing your hands clean until your hands are dry. This is more effective at cleaning your hands than waving your hands dry.
- › To practice good hand hygiene, be sure to clean the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails which you can do by scratching the inside, or palms, of your hands when they are still wet with hand sanitizer. You can also clean the underside of your nails with soap and water, ideally with a nail brush. It is best to keep nails short (less than a quarter inch long).

Always handle your mask with clean hands. Handle it by the ear loops and avoid touching inside and outside of the face-covering section of the mask. Inspect the mask for tears or holes.

Make sure the white side of the mask faces inward (touching your face) and the colorful side of the mask faces outward when in use.

Find the top side of the mask.



## IF YOU MUST WEAR A DISPOSABLE MASK FOR A LONGER PERIOD OF TIME – LIKE A FULL DAY OR YOU NEED TO RE-USE A MASK...

Practice good hand hygiene.

Remove the mask by the elastic ear loops, and place the mask front or dirty side down onto a clean surface.

Then, again, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.

When you are ready to put the mask back on your face, practice good hand hygiene again.

- › The top of the mask includes a metal piece or stiff edge in it.
- › Place the elastic string ear loops around your ears, with the top of the mask going over your nose.
- › Adjust the metal piece to comfortably fit around your nose.

Make sure your mask covers your mouth, nose and chin.

- › Adjust the mask to your face so there are no gaps on the sides. When your mask fits well, air and your breath should not pass through the top of your mask easily.

Avoid touching your face and mask when you are wearing it.

Clean your hands again after you have finished adjusting the mask on your face.

Also, clean your hands for at least 20 seconds before removing your mask. Use the elastic strings, or ear loops, to remove your mask from behind your ears.

Keep the mask away from you and surfaces while removing it.

Discard the mask immediately after use - preferably into a closed bin.

Wash your hands after discarding the mask.

All of these steps combined help you effectively use your disposable mask.

Pick the mask up from the elastic ear loops, and place it back on your face - not touching the inside or outside of the mask.

Wipe the surface where the mask was sitting with a disinfectant wipe, and again practice good hand hygiene.

**!** If you're wearing goggles, glasses or a shield, you will want to put them on after you have put on your mask.



## OTHER TYPES OF MASKS

**Mask with a face shield attached** - Fold it in half to give the face shield a crease. This will help fit the mask to your face and offer you greater protection. Handle the mask by the earloops.

**Cloth masks** - Put your chin in first, then your nose, and then go around your ears. Handle the mask by the earloops.



## USE OF A CLOTH FACE COVERING

Just like with a disposable mask, it's important to practice good hand hygiene before touching a cloth face covering.

- › Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and dry your hands completely.
- › If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for at least 20 seconds.
- › Again, to practice good hand hygiene, be sure to clean the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your nails.

Make sure your cloth mask covers your mouth, nose and chin.

- › Adjust it to your face so there are no gaps on the sides.

**Tying cloth masks** - Tie the first set of strings at the top of your head. Tie the second set of strings a little bit looser around your neck.

When your mask fits well, air and your breath should not pass through the top of your mask easily.

Tie or secure your face covering to prevent it from slipping or moving around your face during use. If your cloth covering is slipping and moving, it will make its use less effective and make you have to touch your mask and face.

It's important to fit your cloth covering snugly to your face with clean hands and to avoid touching your face and mask when you are wearing it.

Wash your cloth mask after use and do not share it with others unless the mask has been washed and dried completely. Wash with laundry detergent (cold or warm water is okay), and hang to dry, or dry with low heat. These steps will clean the mask of germs, while preserving the mask's condition.



## DON'TS

Do not use a ripped or damp mask.

Do not wear the mask only over your mouth OR only over your nose. Effective use of a mask means BOTH your mouth and nose are covered.

Do not wear a loose mask. Effective use of a mask means your mask fits snugly on your face.

Do not touch the front of your mask or your face.

Do not wear the mask around your neck.

Do not hang the mask over one ear.

Do not remove the mask to talk to someone or do other activities that would require you to touch the mask. Avoid removing your mask during car rides as touching your mask more often makes for more opportunities to spread germs.

Do not leave your used mask within the reach of others. If it's disposable, throw it away in the trash immediately after use.

Don't continue to re-use the same disposable mask. Instead get a cloth mask that you can wash, dry and re-use. This is more effective at preventing COVID-19 than re-using the same disposable mask.

**▶ Watch our video on how to effectively wear and handle a mask: [bit.ly/wwhmaskuse](https://bit.ly/wwhmaskuse)**

- ✔ It is important to hold folks around you accountable for wearing their masks correctly because they protect you when they wear a mask and you protect them when you wear a mask.

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- ✔ When you are in spaces where it is difficult to distance yourself from others it's even more important to consistently wear a mask and handle it correctly. This means practicing good hand hygiene before and after touching your mask and making sure it snugly covers your nose, mouth and chin at all times.

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- ✔ If you are in a space where you cannot socially distance yourself easily and you need a snack or water, it is best to leave the crowd or space before eating that snack or taking a drink. Consider using a beverage container with a straw to make it easier to take a quick drink while using your mask. Also be sure to clean your hands before and after removing your mask and in between touching and/or eating your food or drinking your beverage. Try to eat snacks and hydrate with water before putting your mask on for an extended period of time.

**We hope you learned a lot about healthy mask use and care.  
We have a few more tips around COVID-19 prevention.**

- › Remember that mask use alone cannot protect you from COVID-19. Maintain at least a 6-foot distance from others, with the exception of folks you live with, and wash your hands frequently to help keep you healthy, and to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- › Medical providers need to wear gloves and other PPE when appropriate.
- › Children under 2 years old, and anyone with trouble breathing, should not wear masks and cloth face coverings.
- › For non-medical providers, it is important to avoid using N95 masks and other PPE (personnel protective equipment) as healthcare providers and other essential workers need these items.

**If you are experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19, please call our Whitman-Walker team at 202.745.7000 for a phone evaluation of your symptoms and to schedule an appointment for COVID-19 testing at our northwest or southeast health centers.**

**THANK YOU FOR READING AND LEARNING AND FOR HELPING PREVENT NEW CASES OF COVID-19!**

