

Appropriate face masks should be worn at all times when around individuals outside of your immediate household.

Wearing a cloth face mask protects you and those around you from contracting COVID-19.

Wearing cloth face masks protect you by:

- Reducing your exposure to infectious respiratory droplets.

Wearing cloth face masks protect those around you by:

- Blocking the release of exhaled respiratory particles into the environment and the infectious material contained in these particles.
- They effectively block most large droplets, but they can also block the transmission of fine droplets and particles.

As a result, universal masking, when strictly adhered to, can help avert future lockdowns, especially if combined with other public health interventions such as social distancing, hand hygiene and adequate ventilation.

Common myths about face masks:

- Wearing a mask does not raise the carbon dioxide (CO₂) level in the air you breathe as the CO₂ molecule is small enough to easily pass through any cloth mask material.
- Wearing a mask does not limit the amount of available oxygen you are able to breathe.

Considerations for selecting a mask¹

Do

- Choose a cloth face mask that is made with two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric. Cloth face masks should be washed regularly.
- Non-medical disposable masks are single use masks that may be preferred in situations where your mask is likely to get wet or dirty.
- Ensure the mask completely covers your nose and mouth while secured underneath your chin.
- Choose a mask that fits snugly against the sides of your face without any gaps.

Do not

- Choose a mask with a single layer of fabric, such as bandanas and gaiters. They do not provide adequate protection against transmission.
- Choose masks that have exhalation valves or vents, which allow infectious particles to escape.
- Place masks on children who are two years of age or younger.
- Choose surgical masks and respirators that are meant for health care workers as these are in short supply.

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

When to wear a mask²

Face mask use is most important in indoor spaces and outdoors when physical distance of greater than six feet cannot be maintained. Face masks should be used whenever an individual is in public and when engaging in activities such as grocery shopping, attending medical appointments, and other essential activities.

Use of face masks is especially important when gathering with those outside your household.

A significant number of COVID-19 infections are happening in casual social gatherings, such as dinner parties and holiday gatherings. The AMA strongly recommends against engaging in these activities, but should you choose to gather with others outside your immediate household, masking is essential to help protect you and those around you.

Within households, face masks should be used when a member of the household is sick or has had recent potential COVID-19 exposure (e.g., known close contact or potential exposure related to occupation, crowded public settings, travel or non-household members in your house).

