

Safety perception – Not a medical device

Alice Twain



In the middle of the Italian Corona virus crisis, people are walking around with anti dust masks and woolen scarves pulled up over the mouth (despite the 16°C of the past few days). While Italy does indeed have a couple clusters of Covid-19 (in Lombardy and Veneto), the overall figures of the positive are probably overstated (only about half of the case are confirmed positives by the final exams, as confirmed by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità) and kept artificially higher by tests performed irregularly on people who show no symptoms (WHO recommended only testing people who show specific symptoms).

The panic drove some of us to raiding supermarkets (the distribution chain works well and there are no food shortages), stock up on face masks that are only necessary to those who indeed have Covid-19, to the medical personnel, and to those who have certain chronic conditions or have an ill-functioning immunitarian system (due to conditions or medical treatment). Also hand sanitizers, those gels that can be used as a backup in case of emergency when you are out and can't find a bathroom with running water and soap to wash up, have basically disappeared, mythicized as the best way to clean up (no, a good wash up with warm water and soap is still best!).

This mock face mask is not a medical device, it has no power to stop viruses and bacteria. It's just a piece of garter stitch that can cover your nose and mouth. It doesn't even filter out dust and smog particles. What it gives us in a few moments of time off, time we can use to reflect on what is actually going on, on how or perception of safety and lack thereof is influenced by the media, by myths, by urban legends (one that is circulating in Italy is that drinking often will wash the virus into the stomach and prevent the diseases), by amulets and rites. It is also an opportunity for us to get informed from reliable sources.

The World Health Organization has an excellent page on Corona virus and Covid-19 (www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019), packed with reliable information and wise suggestions. Just read what the WHO writes and stop panicking. This disease is serious but we are not going extinct. Keeping it under control is useful to avoid flooding the hospitals with people who have pneumonia and need breathing support, and to limit its likelihood of mutating. Panic will just make things worse, though.

This pattern is free

Yet, I invite every person who downloads it to donate at least one Dollar or Euro (or local currency) to the Red Cross, either the International Red Cross (www.icrc.org/en/donate) or your national branch.

How can you prevent the Corona virus from spreading?

To prevent catching and spreading the new Corona virus, the World Health Organization suggests the following measures.



Wash your hands frequently. Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.

Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.

Maintain social distancing. Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.

Why? When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.

Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.

Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.

Practice respiratory hygiene. Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early.

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

Stay informed. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider. Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, your national and local public health authority or your employer on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on whether COVID-19 is spreading in your area. They are best placed to advise on what people in your area should be doing to protect themselves.



Materials

- A few grams of leftover sock or baby yarn, the more colorful the better.
- A pair of 3 mm straight needles (circulars if you prefer) and two DPNs in the same size for the I-cord. If you prefer you can crochet the ties or use two pieces of elastic or ribbons to tie the mask behind your head (instructions to use these are not included).
- Scissors and tapestry needle.

Notes on the techniques

- Use whatever increase or decrease you are at ease with.
- Use whatever short row technique you are at ease with. Since the mask is in garter stitch you can simply turn and slip the first stitch. I actually used German short rows, just because they are the method that I most

recently learned, but you can use whatever method you like.

- I-cord: youtu.be/700AG7Kvbhc.
- I-cord b.o.: youtu.be/GyhgyvEgsBM.

Measures

- Width: 12.5 cm/5".
- Length max: 10.5 cm/4" ¼.
- Length min: 8.5 cm/3" ¼
- Ties: approx 20 cm/8", adapt it to your structure so that you can slip the ties behind the ears.

Gauge: 15 sts = 5 cm/2" in g st; exact gauge is not essential in this project, changing the gauge will produce masks of different size. Adapt the instruction to your gauge if you want to knit a mask in a different yarn.

Instructions

C.o. 38 sts.

Starting border

Row 1: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k to end.

Work this row for 4 times total.

Row 2: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k4, m1, *k8, m1* 3 times, k to end (42 sts).

Work row 1 three more times.

Short row section

Row 1: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k to last 13 sts, turn (use your favorite short row method).

Row 2: k to last 13 sts, turn.

Rows 3-6: k to previous short row, hide wrap if necessary, k3, turn.

Row 7: k to end, hiding wraps as you come to them.

Row 8: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k to end, hiding wraps as you come to them.

Rows 9-12: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k to end.

Work this section for 4 times total.

Top border

Row 1: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k3, k2tog, *k7, k2tog* for 3 times, k to end (38 sts).

Rows 2-4: slip 3 sts pwise WYIF, k to end.

C.o. 3 sts and use I-cord bind off to bind off all sts, you will be left with 3 sts. If you prefer to add crocheted ties or to add ribbons or elastics, just b.o. all sts loosely.

Ties

Continue working in I-cord for approximately 20 cm, or for as long as necessary to hook the mask behind one ear. Join the tie to the cast on by picking up one stitch from the edge before proceeding like for the I-cord bind off. Pick up one extra stitch after each roundlet and keep going until you have completely framed the bottom edge of the mask. Continue working in I-cord to create the second strap. Do not bind off, graft the three live stitches to the upper corner of the mask.

Finishing

Hide the two ends of the yarn.

Wash the mask in warm water with a mild detergent and dry flat.

This mask does not protect you from catching any viruses of bacteria, it is just useful against panic or as part of a costume. Wash the mask after every use, makes sure to never wear a mask that has already been worn by another person as this person may already have some kind of flu, cold, or other respiratory infection.

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