Get the Facts on Masks

Each type of mask is designed for a specific purpose. Respirators such as N95 will protect against exposure to airborne particles, including viruses. Surgical masks are a barrier to spreading droplets and spit. Non-medical masks help limit the spread of droplets and spit when you sneeze or cough.

Good Practices

- Learn how to properly put on and remove your mask. You can contact the virus when removing a soiled mask incorrectly.
- Masks that are not worn correctly will not provide adequate protection.
  - Do not wear a mask under your nose. You will contaminate the outside of the mask when you exhale, and you will not be protected from the virus.
  - Do not wear a mask that is too loose or too large. Open gaps will not properly seal around your face.
  - Do not wear a mask inside-out.
- Do not share your non-medical masks with other people.
- Do not re-use disposable masks (unless your workplace is using an approved method to safely re-process and sterilize them).
- Wash and dry cloth non-medical masks between uses.
- Do not wear a damaged mask. A damaged mask will be not effective at blocking droplets and particles.
- Wet masks will allow more air and small particles through than dry masks. Dirt and dust can also reduce the effectiveness of the mask or make it difficult to breathe.
  - A mask can become wet when you sweat, breathe, speak, shout, sing, sneeze, or cough.
  - A mask can become wet or soiled from airborne droplets from other people, touching dirty surfaces and then touching the mask, steam from cooking, the weather, or spray and dust from work processes.
  - Wet contaminants such as bodily fluids can soak through a mask and infect you.
- To prevent fogging of eyeglass, make sure the flexible strip is secured tightly over the bridge of your nose. Clean your lenses with anti-fog eyeglass spray cleaner.

Putting the Mask On

1. Wash your hands using soap and water if available, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Remove your mask from its package.
3. Inspect your mask. Do not use if it's damaged, wet, dirty, or expired (if applicable).
4. Hold your mask facing the correct direction.
   - Flat accordion-style masks are often white on the inside and coloured on the outside.
   - Shaped (stiff or cup) masks are often a single colour. Concave (curving in) is the inside and convex (curving out) is the outside. Do not fold them inside out.
   - Handmade cloth non-medical masks may be shaped or have a decorative pattern on the outside surface. Make sure you can easily identify the two sides.

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5. Secure your mask according to its style.
   – For masks with elastics that go around the ears: hook one ear loop around each ear.
   – For masks with elastics that go over the head: pull the upper elastic over the top of the head and the lower elastic around the back of your head.
   – For masks with ties or straps: Tie the upper strap around the top of your head, then tie the lower strap around the back of your head.

6. Expand your mask fully so it completely covers your nose and mouth and there are no large gaps along the sides. You may need to pull the bottom edge under your chin.

7. Pinch the bendable nose strip to fit the bridge of your nose without leaving gaps.

8. Wash your hands again using soap and water if available, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

When Wearing a Mask

1. Do not touch the outside surface of your mask. Assume that it's contaminated.

2. If you do touch your mask, wash or sanitize your hands.

3. Continue to practice physical distancing and good hygiene. Wearing a mask alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19, but it can help.

4. Take precautions to keep your mask clean and effective. Protect it with a plastic face shield if you expect to be exposed to dirt or wet sources.

5. If the mask becomes damaged, wet or dirty, replace it with a fresh one.

Taking the Mask Off

1. Wash your hands using soap and water if available, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

2. Do not touch the outside of your mask.

3. Loosen your mask according to its style.
   – For masks with elastics that go around the ears: unhook both ear loops.
   – For masks with elastics that go over the head: pull the bottom elastic strap, then pull the top elastic strap over the head.
   – For masks with ties or straps: undo the bottom strap, then the upper strap.

4. Lean forward and remove your mask.

5. Throw away single-use masks in a lined garbage can. Place home-made cloth non-medical masks in the laundry and wash before re-using.

6. Wash your hands using soap and water if available, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada
https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus

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