



HOW TO WEAR A MASK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Updated March 2, 2022

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

Current masking recommendations are available in the [Updated Masking Guidance for Michiganders](#).

How do I choose a mask?

Masks provide different levels of protection depending on the type and how they are used. The best mask is the most protective mask that fits you properly. For the most protection, there are two important considerations when choosing a mask:

1. A **well-fitting mask** adheres to the side of your face and covers your nose and mouth.
2. A **mask with good filtration** that has layers of tightly woven materials.

KN95 face masks or similar masks or respirators are a good choice in high-risk and high-transmission settings, **provided it fits you properly**. Please see the graphic on to the right to help you determine which mask is right for you.



[View the Mask Up, Mask Right graphic online.](#)

What do I look for when choosing a KN95 mask?

When choosing a KN95 mask, consider how well it fits and read the manufacturer's instructions. These instructions should include information on how to wear, store and properly dispose of the mask. Masks have markings printed on the product to indicate they are authentic; see [CDC factors to consider when planning to purchase respirators from another country](#). KN95 masks, depending on the standards they are designed to meet, filter varying levels of particles in the air.

How do I wear a mask (including KN95s or other disposable non-medical masks)

Your mask should cover your mouth and nose and be secure under your chin. A mask that does not fit properly may not protect you and those around you.

1. Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water, washing for 20 seconds or while saying the ABCs, before handling your mask.
2. Position the mask under your chin with the nose piece facing up.
3. Place the straps of the mask over each of your ears.

4. Adjust the straps to have the mask fitting snugly to the face without any gaps. Your nose and mouth should be completely covered. Facial hair may prevent the mask's ability to seal to the face. Push down the nose clip firmly to your nose with both hands (see below).
5. Use both hands to cover the mask and tighten the seal.

NOTE: If the mask has no gaps along the edge, the air inside the mask will become warm.



Can I wear two masks to increase protection against COVID-19?

Wearing two masks (called double-masking) is when you wear a disposable three-ply medical-style mask **and** a cloth mask on top. The protection offered by a mask is limited by the way the mask fits. [An ill-fitting mask does not offer the best protection against COVID-19.](#) Double-masking is an easy way to improve fit, which also improves protection. The more particles that are blocked, the better you are protected against getting COVID-19.

Double masking should only include one disposable three-ply medical procedure mask and one cloth mask. You should not wear two disposable masks or combine an N95 or KN95 with any other mask. Disposable masks are not designed to fit tightly and wearing more than one will not improve fit. Wearing two cloth masks does not provide adequate protection.



How do I knot and tuck a medical mask to improve the fit?

A knotted and tucked medical procedure mask is created by bringing together the corners and ear loops on each side, knotting the ears loops together where they attach to the mask, and then tucking in and flattening the resulting extra mask material to minimize the side gaps. [Learn how to knot and tuck your mask to improve the fit.](#)

[Other options to improve fit](#) include wearing a mask fitter or wearing a nylon covering (like a gaiter) over a mask.

How do I care for and reuse my mask?

Should I wash my mask between uses?

- For cloth masks: It is best to wash your mask after every use. It is especially important if the mask becomes visibly dirty or wet. It may be helpful to have multiple cloth masks so you have one to wear while another is being washed. Never wash disposable face masks.
- For KN95 masks and other disposable masks such as surgical masks and non-health care grade N95s: [CDC](#) recommends following the manufacturer's instructions on how to wear and store the mask. Do not attempt to wash the mask. Washing will disrupt the fibers' ability to filter air.

Can I reuse my KN95 or other disposable mask?

The [CDC](#) does provide guidance on limited reuse. To reuse, the mask should be carefully placed inside of a clean paper bag, with the date of first use on the paper bag, paying attention to not touch the contaminated front of the mask for storage. After at least 72 hours has passed, the stored mask may be used again.

When and how should I discard my KN95 or other disposable mask?

Disposable masks may be discarded in the normal household trash. Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water after mask removal. Dispose of a mask when:

- It becomes dirty/soiled.
- It becomes difficult to breathe through.
- It no longer covers the nose and mouth.
- It has stretched out or damaged ear loops which no longer allows a seal to the face.
- It becomes wet.
- It has holes or tears in the material.

Are there any precautions I should take with my mask?

- Avoid touching your mask when wearing it or after taking it off. Take it off by the ear loops or ties. Clean your hands after you touch your mask.
- When you put your mask on and off, you will likely touch your face. Before putting on or taking off your mask, always wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water or use an alcohol-based sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Do not put a used mask in places where others can touch them or where germs trapped in your mask can touch other surfaces, such as countertops or tables.
- Do not throw your mask loose in a bag or backpack. Consider keeping a dedicated paper bag with you to store your mask if you must take it off outside your home.

Additional questions about wearing a mask

Can I wear a clear face mask?

Wearing a mask may make it difficult for some people to understand what others are saying because words are muffled, and visual cues are blocked. This is worse with short or one-word statements because there isn't context. Some people rely on lip reading to help understand what is being said.

Clear masks or cloth masks with a plastic panel can be used to aid in communication when interacting with the following groups:

- People who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Young children or students learning to read.
- Students learning a new language.
- People with disabilities.
- People who need to see the proper shape of the mouth for making appropriate vowel sounds (for example, when singing).

Can I wear a face shield instead of a mask?

Face shields, including plastic shields and hybrid products that have fabric around the edges of the shield, are not a replacement for a mask. A face shield can be worn over a mask for additional protection.

Can I wear a mask with an exhalation valve or vent?

It is not recommended to wear masks with exhalation valves or vents because respiratory droplets may be expelled through the outlet. This type face covering does not prevent the wearer from transmitting the virus to others.

Can a business refuse service to visitors or customers who are not wearing a mask?

Yes. Policies, such as requiring masks, established by event organizers and businesses may be instituted to fit the specific needs of their customers. Event organizer and business policies should be followed. Events and businesses open to the public may refuse entry to those who decline to wear a mask.

Additional Information & Resources:

- **Mask right when you mask up.** Michiganders can learn more about recommendations and benefits of masking at [Mask Up, Mask Right](#).
- **Get vaccinated against COVID-19.** Michiganders should get up to date on their COVID-19 vaccine. Learn more about vaccines and when you're up to date at [Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine](#).
- **Therapeutics.** After testing positive for COVID-19, individuals who are unvaccinated, high-risk and/or are immunocompromised should talk to their doctors about whether they meet eligibility criteria for antibody or antiviral treatment to help with their recovery. Learn more about [COVID-19 Therapeutics](#).
- **Isolation and Quarantine.** Staying away from others when you are sick or were recently exposed to COVID-19 are important tools to preventing further spread of the virus. Learn more about [what happens when you have or are exposed to COVID-19](#)
- **Get tested if you are exposed or have symptoms.** Anyone with signs or symptoms of COVID-19 should get tested regardless of vaccination status or prior infection. Testing before unmasked gatherings provides an additional layer of protection. Find a test site at [Michigan.gov/CoronavirusTest](#). Take additional steps to protect yourself and others. For additional guidance on mitigation strategies see [How to Protect Yourself and Others](#).