Types of Masks

There are many types of masks you can use to protect yourself and others from getting and spreading COVID-19. When choosing a mask, choose one that fits snugly. Learn more about how to choose a mask that fits well and offers the best protection.

**Cloth Masks**

Cloth Masks can be made from a variety of fabrics, and many types of cloth masks are available.

**Look for**

- Multiple layers of tightly woven, breathable fabric
- Nose wire
- Mask should block light when held up to bright light source

**Do NOT wear**

- Masks with exhalation valves or vents
- Single layer or masks made of thin fabric that don't block light

**When to wear**

- Anytime you are indoors or outdoors with people who don't live with you.

**2 Ways to have better fit and extra protection**

- Wear two masks (disposable mask underneath AND cloth mask on top)
- Combine a cloth mask with a fitter or brace

**Disposable Masks**

Disposable face masks are widely available.
Look for:

- A description indicating multiple layers of non-woven material
- Nose wire

Do NOT wear

- Masks with gaps around the sides of the face or nose
- If wet or dirty

When to wear

- Anytime you are indoors or outdoors with people you don’t live with.

Ways to have better fit and extra protection

- Wear two masks (disposable mask underneath **AND** cloth mask on top)
- A cloth mask can be combined with a fitter or brace
- Knot and tuck ear loops of a 3-ply mask where they join the edge of the mask
  - Fold and tuck the unneeded material under the edges (See: https://youtu.be/UANi8Cc71A0).

**KN95 Masks**

**KN95** masks are a type of filtering facepiece respirator that are commonly made in China and similar to N95 masks commonly used in the United States.

Look for

KN95 masks that meet requirements similar to those set by CDC’s National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) for respirators

Do NOT wear

- If you have certain types of facial hair
- **Counterfeit (fake)** KN95 masks
- If hard to breathe
- With other masks; wear KN95 alone only

BE AWARE: About 60% KN95 masks in the United States are **counterfeit (fake)** and DO NOT meet NIOSH requirements.
For a better fit and additional protection

Sometimes, you may need more protection to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19.

- Riding on planes, buses, trains, or other forms of public transportation, especially when you can't keep at least 6 feet away from people who don't live with you
- Taking care of someone who is sick with COVID-19
- Working at a job where you interact with large numbers of the public. Examples of jobs might include bus drivers and grocery store workers
- If you are at increased risk for severe illness, for example, older adults or people with certain underlying medical conditions

For more information on science behind improving how your mask protects you, see Improve the Fit and Filtration of Your Mask to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19.

Reserve N95 respirators for healthcare workers

CDC does not recommend the use of N95 respirators for protection against COVID-19 in non-healthcare settings because N95 respirators should be reserved for health care workers.