

# COVID-19 PREVENTATIVE MEASURES FACEMASKS AND CLOTH FACE COVERINGS

Cloth facecoverings are being recommended for use by the public, but these are different than medical facemasks. **N95 respirators and surgical masks** are used by medical personnel and patients in healthcare environments for single use and disposal. These are not necessary for general use by the public and should be preserved for use by medical personnel. **Cloth face coverings** may help to catch particles expelled by a cough or sneeze and reduce spread of virus by people who may be infected but not showing symptoms.

## WHAT IS A MASK OR FACE COVERING DESIGNED TO DO?

- Face coverings are one form of personal protective equipment (PPE) used in controlling disease transmission.
- Proper use may prevent the spread of virus from an infected person, or prevent a healthy person from becoming infected.
- In some cultures, simple cloth face covers are worn by those who suspect they are getting sick to prevent spreading the infection to others. These face covers may help catch particles expelled by a cough or sneeze.

## HOW DO MASKS AND CLOTH FACE COVERINGS WORK?

- Not all face coverings are equally effective. Masks and cloth face coverings are made of different materials depending on intended use.
- Facemasks are tested for their ability to trap viruses in respiratory droplets moving at high velocity, such as in a cough or sneeze.

## HOW SHOULD FACE COVERINGS BE HANDLED?

- **Masks and cloth face coverings should be handled assuming they are contaminated with the virus causing COVID-19.**
- **Face coverings should be removed without touching the inside. They should be immediately placed with dirty laundry, or stored in a plastic bag until they can be properly cleaned.**
- Wash your hands after handling a used face covering or use hand sanitizer if hand washing is not an option. If possible, wash your face after removing a face covering.
- Cloth face coverings should be washed after each use. Follow CDC guidelines at [go.ncsu.edu/cdclaundry](https://go.ncsu.edu/cdclaundry).

## ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS



## HOW SHOULD FACE COVERINGS BE WORN?

- Cloth face coverings can be uncomfortable to wear. A proper fit is tight over the nose, mouth and chin.
  - Shaving is not necessary for cloth face coverings or surgical masks.
- Cloth face coverings can help reduce disease transmission but wearing one does not provide absolute protection.
- According to CDC, wear cloth face coverings whenever interacting with the public or when caring for someone who is sick or may be infected.
- It is not necessary to wear a face covering while at home or outside for exercise.

Face coverings can be an effective means of slowing the spread of the infectious agent for many respiratory illnesses and may help slow the spread of COVID-19. Wearing a face covering does **NOT** provide complete protection and does not replace other ways of slowing virus spread such as:

- Staying away from public places and group gatherings
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth
- Washing hands and using hand sanitizer often
- Practicing physical distancing

