



# T3i: Essential Supplies – Face Masks

## Why is this Tool Helpful to You?

Face masks reduce the spread of virus due to coughing, breathing and talking. Physical barriers like masks are the most effective tool against COVID-19.

## Disclaimer

The use of information on this site is at reader's own risk and no party involved in the information production can be held responsible for its use. By using the content found on this website, you further acknowledge that it is not intended to be a substitute for public health agency guidance, professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition. Never disregard public health agency or professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read here.

## What You Need

**Preferred:** Surgical mask or homemade HEPA filter-based mask

**Acceptable:** Other homemade mask (bandana/old scarf/old towel/old t-shirt & 2 elastic bands [+ optional coffee filter])

**Unacceptable:** No mask



## Should I Wear a Mask?

**When leaving the house – Yes.**

**When at home and you are symptomatic or have had recent contact with someone with COVID-19 – Yes.**

**When at home and you have been in lock-down for greater than 14 days and no one at home has symptoms – No.**

There is no harm in wearing a mask covering your face, and it is believed to prevent droplets and a gaseous cloud containing the virus traveling up to 8 meters / 27 feet.

- COVID-19 is transmitted in droplets or a gaseous cloud exhaled by an individual infected with COVID-19
  - These droplets can travel 2 meters or 6 feet away from the individual
  - A gaseous cloud can travel for up to 8 meters / 27 feet
- A mask covering the nose and mouth will prevent or dramatically reduce COVID-19 transmission
- Masks can discourage face-touching, which also protects you against COVID-19
- Masks are **only effective** when used in combination with frequent hand washing/sanitizing, social distancing, and avoiding face-touching
- You **must** wear a mask when caring for someone suspected of having COVID-19 or if you exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 and must leave the house (e.g. to get tested)
- You **should** wear a mask if you may come into contact with people
- Children under the age of 2, people who have trouble breathing, unconscious, or are incapacitated **should not** wear a facemask due to risk of suffocation

**Source:** [CDC](#), [CDC FAQs](#), [WHO](#), [Lancet](#), [BMJ](#), [JAMA](#)



## Types of Commercial Masks

- Surgical masks are sufficient to prevent COVID-19 transmission
  - The majority of hospital staff use surgical masks when caring for COVID-19 patients
- N95 and FFP3 masks are **not more effective** at preventing respiratory illness transmission than surgical masks (Greenhalgh [et al. 2020](#))
  - N95 and FFP3 masks only provide increased protection when doctors are working directly with the airway (e.g. intubation, bronchoscopy); N95 or FFP3 masks are often **only** worn by healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients during these procedures ([Public Health Ontario](#), [UK PPE Guidelines](#) – see Section 8)
  - Members of the public will not be exposed to this increased risk
  - We do not recommend using N95 masks as it provides you with no additional protection and pulls supply away from essential healthcare workers

Source: [WHO](#), [CDC](#)



## Homemade Masks

- Homemade cloth masks can be similarly effective to a surgical mask if worn correctly
  - Ensure your household has at least 2 homemade masks to prevent reuse

### Basic Mask:

- The CDC has 3 different guides for making a homemade mask: sewn cloth, quick cut t-shirt, and bandana face covering—shown below ([CDC](#) guide and [video](#) from the US Surgeon General)
  - Cotton cloth is preferable to other types of fabric



### Advanced Mask:

- For someone with more time and materials, here is a [video](#) and [guide](#) explaining how to construct a safe face mask from a HEPA filter from a vacuum cleaner bag. It is also recommended that these should be donated to local emergency services.



Source: [CDC](#), [van der Sande et al., 2008](#)



## Putting-On Masks

Adapted from [WHO Guidelines](#), [CDC](#)

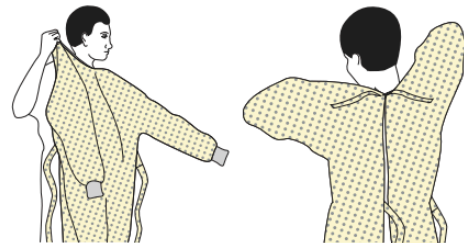
- Wash your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water for 20 seconds before putting on a mask
- Cover the mouth and nose with the mask and **ensure there are no gaps** between your face and the mask
- Put on your face mask **before** putting on your eye protection and gloves

### SEQUENCE FOR PUTTING ON PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

The type of PPE used will vary based on the level of precautions required, such as standard and contact, droplet or airborne infection isolation precautions. The procedure for putting on and removing PPE should be tailored to the specific type of PPE.

#### 1. GOWN

- Fully cover torso from neck to knees, arms to end of wrists, and wrap around the back
- Fasten in back of neck and waist



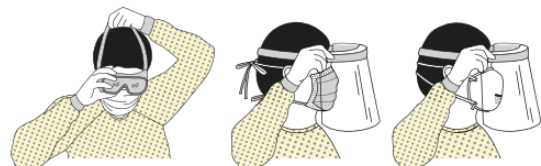
#### 2. MASK OR RESPIRATOR

- Secure ties or elastic bands at middle of head and neck
- Fit flexible band to nose bridge
- Fit snug to face and below chin
- Fit-check respirator



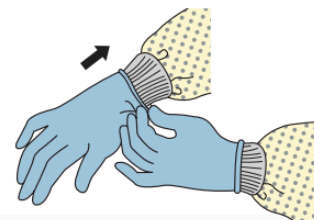
#### 3. GOGGLES OR FACE SHIELD

- Place over face and eyes and adjust to fit



#### 4. GLOVES

- Extend to cover wrist of isolation gown





## Removing Masks

Adapted from [WHO Guidelines](#), [CDC](#)

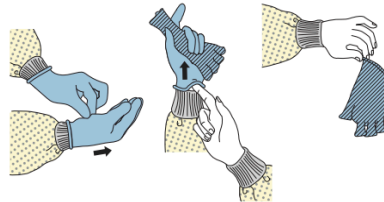
- Take your face mask off **after** removing your gloves and eye protection
- Remove the mask by removing it from behind, pulling the straps over the ears so that the mask falls forward
- **Do not** touch the front of the mask as it may be contaminated with COVID-19
- Surgical Masks: immediately dispose of them in a closed trash bin
- Cloth Masks: immediately place in a separate bag after use and se
- Wash your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water for 20 seconds

### HOW TO SAFELY REMOVE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) EXAMPLE 1

There are a variety of ways to safely remove PPE without contaminating your clothing, skin, or mucous membranes with potentially infectious materials. Here is one example. **Remove all PPE before exiting the patient room** except a respirator, if worn. Remove the respirator **after** leaving the patient room and closing the door. Remove PPE in the following sequence:

#### 1. GLOVES

- Outside of gloves are contaminated!
- If your hands get contaminated during glove removal, immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Using a gloved hand, grasp the palm area of the other gloved hand and peel off first glove
- Hold removed glove in gloved hand
- Slide fingers of ungloved hand under remaining glove at wrist and peel off second glove over first glove
- Discard gloves in a waste container



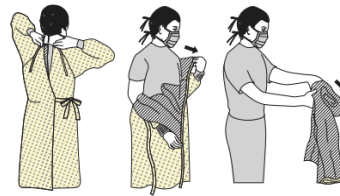
#### 2. GOGGLES OR FACE SHIELD

- Outside of goggles or face shield are contaminated!
- If your hands get contaminated during goggle or face shield removal, immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Remove goggles or face shield from the back by lifting head band or ear pieces
- If the item is reusable, place in designated receptacle for reprocessing. Otherwise, discard in a waste container



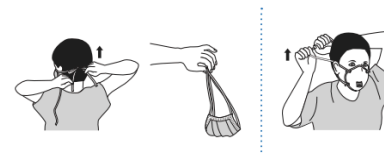
#### 3. GOWN

- Gown front and sleeves are contaminated!
- If your hands get contaminated during gown removal, immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Unfasten gown ties, taking care that sleeves don't contact your body when reaching for ties
- Pull gown away from neck and shoulders, touching inside of gown only
- Turn gown inside out
- Fold or roll into a bundle and discard in a waste container

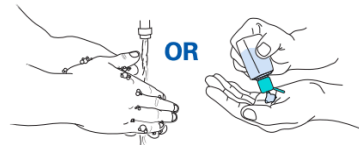


#### 4. MASK OR RESPIRATOR

- Front of mask/respirator is contaminated — **DO NOT TOUCH!**
- If your hands get contaminated during mask/respirator removal, immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Grasp bottom ties or elastics of the mask/respirator, then the ones at the top, and remove without touching the front
- Discard in a waste container



#### 5. WASH HANDS OR USE AN ALCOHOL-BASED HAND SANITIZER IMMEDIATELY AFTER REMOVING ALL PPE



**PERFORM HAND HYGIENE BETWEEN STEPS IF HANDS  
BECOME CONTAMINATED AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER  
REMOVING ALL PPE**





## Reusing Masks

- Commercial masks (surgical masks) **should not be reused** and should be disposed immediately after use
- Cloth masks **can** be reused but must be cleaned or sterilized before reuse. There are a number of methods available, listed in order of preference:
  1. A washing machine using laundry detergent the hot water setting (greater than 70°C/160°F)
  2. Soak in 1-part bleach in 50 parts hot water (greater than 70°C/160°F) for >5 minutes, then rinse with water
    - This means 2 tablespoons or 20mL of bleach per liter of water, or 1/3 of a cup bleach per gallon of water
- Masks should be hung to air-dry

Source: [CDC](#), [University of Utah](#)