

5 Mistakes You May Be Making When Wearing Face Masks

By Sara Bondell - May 20, 2020

The Centers of Disease Control (CDC) now recommends wearing a mask in public, but simply wearing one doesn't mean you are protected or protecting others.

To help stop the spread of COVID-19, you need to put your mask on right and avoid these common mistakes:



Mistake 1: Your mask only covers

your mouth – If your mask only covers your mouth, you're wearing it wrong. We breathe partially or completely through our nose, and you can become infected by breathing in viral particles through your nostrils. A mask worn only over the mouth won't contain droplets if you sneeze. If your nose is not covered by a mask, you also risk contamination from the mask itself, which collects germs on its exterior.

Your mask should cover more than just the tip of your nose. Place it on the bridge of your nose to create the best seal possible.



Mistake 2: Your mask is too loose – If you're wearing a surgical mask or cloth mask, make sure it fits snugly against the sides of your face. It needs to be comfortable and allow for breathing without restriction, but it shouldn't billow out on the sides. The goal is to create a barrier that blocks as much air as possible.

Keep in mind, facial hair can prevent a mask from fitting you properly, so you may want to trim your facial hair down before you put on your mask.



Mistake 3: You keep touching your mask – If your mask touches another part of your body that is potentially contaminated with the virus—hair, forehead, hands—and the mask is put over your mouth and nose, you are at risk for infection.

Always be sure to wash your hands before putting your mask on, and once it is in place and you are out in public, don't keep touching or adjusting it. When you're not wearing it, don't leave it around your neck in case there was any type of contamination.



Mistake 4: You're taking your mask off

wrong – When putting your mask on and taking your mask off, be careful not to touch the front of the mask. Instead of touching the mask itself, the CDC recommends grasping the mask by the ear loops or ties. Always handle your mask with clean hands and make sure you are not touching your eyes, nose or mouth when removing the mask. Immediately wash your hands after handling your mask and store it in a separate containment area like a paper bag.

You can read a step-by-step guide for properly taking off your mask [here](#).



Mistake 5: You aren't properly cleaning your mask – If you are planning on reusing your mask, you need to make sure it is not contaminated. The CDC says you can wash homemade cloth masks in the washing machine. Depending on frequency of use, you should routinely wash your cloth masks. You should also thoroughly dry the masks before wearing again.

Once a mask is visibly soiled or becomes damaged, you should safely dispose of it in a closed trash bin, and wash your hands.

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NOTE:

You can also put used face masks that are not significantly soiled in a cardboard box and let them sit for 4 days to de-contaminate, then they are safe to wear again!