

Understanding the Difference: Homemade Masks

	N95 Respirator	Surgical Mask	Homemade Mask or Paper Mask
User	Health Care Workers	Health Care Workers and patients in healthcare settings	General Public
Risk Factor	High Risk Situations	Moderate Risk Situations	Low Risk Situations
Design	Designed to protect the person wearing the mask from aerosols, splatter, sprays, or blood.	Designed for health care workers to stop droplets being spread by the wearer – NOT to protect the wearer from breathing in aerosols.	Designed to contain coughs and sneezes and prevent disease transmission to others – NOT to protect the wearer from breathing in aerosols.
When To Wear	Recommended for use when health care workers care for patients with COVID-19 and performing procedures that put them most at risk of virus exposure.	Recommended for health care providers during single or multiple patient interactions or routine health procedures. Surgical masks are also recommended when N95s are not available.	Recommended for use when a person can't perform social distancing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When coughing or sneezing. • Using public transportation. • Shopping and working at essential businesses like grocery stores and pharmacies.
Fit Testing Required	Yes. Due to the fit, the wearer may find it hard to breathe. These masks are designed only for health care workers who have been fit tested.	No	No Scarves and bandanas can be used if necessary.
Use Limitations	Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse. Both are important and viable options when supplies are limited. Extended use is preferable. Follow CDC guidance on Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment	Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse. Both are important and viable options when supplies are limited. Extended use is preferable. Follow CDC guidance on Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment	Homemade/Cloth Masks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be washed after each use. • Should not be worn damp or when wet from spit or mucus.

Facemasks and respirators offer a physical barrier to contact with respiratory droplets and aerosols. When used correctly, masks, along with other preventative measures such as hand washing, and social distancing reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission leading to COVID-19 infection.

Help Support Health Care Workers

Do not purchase masks designed for health care professionals. N95 and surgical masks are designed to protect those who are working in high risk situations with a likelihood of exposure. Instead, make your own mask or purchase one from an online small business.