

What's the correct way to wear a face mask?



With information from José Longino and Mariana Perales

During **the COVID-19 pandemic**, face masks are now in high demand as part of **coronavirus protection strategies**.

This is because the usual way **the virus is expelled is through the mouth and nose**, and **it enters mainly through the mouth, nose, and eyes**.

SHOULD WE WEAR FACE MASKS OR NOT?

Health authorities in several countries such as the **United States and China**, have recommended that the **general public wear them**.

Authorities from Mexican states such as **Nuevo León and Mexico City** have also asked people to **wear them when they leave the house**.

The **World Health Organization** and the **Ministry of Health in Mexico** have said that **they do not necessarily** recommend them **for everyone**, but **neither are they prohibited**.

In other words, **people are free to wear them** if they so choose. In general, it can be **useful to wear them when going to the supermarket or crowded places**.

The risks of wearing face masks:

The Ministry of Mexican Health gave the following reasons to explain why face masks are not necessarily recommended for everyone:

- They give you a **“false sense of security”** (with face masks, you still need to maintain a safe distance, wash your hands with soap and water, etc.)
- Constantly raising **your hands to your face to adjust the mask** could potentially carry the virus to your face
- They are misused (for example they **only cover the mouth and not the nose**)

For doctors and those who are infected, the use of N-95 masks is mandatory

The WHO and the Federal Ministry of Health emphasize that:

- those who are infected must **wear them**
- **people who live with someone who is infected** should also wear them
- the general public shouldn't wear the **special N-95 masks** (and preferably, not the normal surgical masks either), since they are essential for **doctors and health staff, the masks should be left** for them to wear



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The area of **TecSalud recommends the use of cloth face masks** so that the normal masks (surgical masks) are available for medical staff.

Cloth masks can be washed (see how to wash them) and reused.

<https://twitter.com/HospZambranoTec/status/1247977208221745153>

HOW SHOULD FACE MASKS BE WORN?

This is how face masks should be worn correctly:

Before you put it on:

- **Wash your hands** with soap and water **before** putting it on.
- **Check which is the correct side** (the thick seams should be on the inside of the face mask).
- Pass the elastic bands over your head and ears and make sure the mask completely **covers your nose and mouth**. Make sure that your hands do not touch the inside part.

While you are wearing the mask:

- **Keep it over your nose and mouth at all times.**
- **Avoid touching it** whilst using it.
- If you have to touch it, wash your hands as soon as possible.
- **Change face masks when they get wet** and replace them with a clean, dry one (unless it is cloth, which can absorb more).

How should you remove it?

- **Wash your hands before** taking it off.
- Remove it by taking off the straps at the side and carefully separate it.
- **Remove** from behind, holding it by the straps without touching the front; **then wash your hands** again.
- Put it immediately into a closed container until you wash it (or if it is not cloth, throw it away at once into a closed container).



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HOW TO DISPOSE OF FACE MASKS?

When you remove the face mask, put it into a bag or container and close it.

- *If it is a cloth mask, it can be washed (wash exposed clothes like this).*
- *If it is a normal mask, it must be thrown away (into a closed container).*

If the face mask is from an infected person and it has already fulfilled its purpose, **apply these measures:**

Professor of biology and sustainable development from the **State of Mexico campus of the Tec, Dr. María del Carmen Hernández**, says:

*“For management of domestic waste from the homes of people isolated in quarantine due to **COVID-19**, this is **waste with a risk of infection to public health.**”*

Disposable material such as gloves, face masks and disposable tissues used by sick people **must be put in a plastic bag and hermetically sealed.**

*This garbage **cannot be mixed with other types of waste** such as organic garbage, packaging, paper, glass, among others, or be dumped in the environment.“*



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WHO SHOULDN'T USE THEM?

- *Children under the age of 2*
- *People with respiratory problems*
- *Those who can't take them off without help*

HOW CAN I MAKE A HOMEMADE FACE MASK?

To leave the house, you can put something on that covers your nose and mouth, such as homemade **face masks**, t-shirts or bandanas.

The **CDC** has published a video that shows how to make one from a bandana:

{"preview_thumbnail":"/sites/default/files/styles/video_embed_wysiwyg_preview/public/video_thumbnails/t
Video (Adaptable)."}]

