

INFORMATION ON THE USE OF A SURGICAL MASK

Should I wear a surgical mask?

Most people **will not** benefit from wearing a surgical mask. Masks are most of benefit to people who are sick so they don't cough on others, and health care workers who have frequent, close contact with sick people. General public surgical masks in the community are only helpful in preventing people who have coronavirus from spreading it to others.

If you are well, you do not need to wear a surgical mask, as there is little evidence supporting the widespread use of surgical masks in healthy people to prevent transmission in public.

If you are in isolation, you should use a surgical mask (if you have one) in the following circumstances:

- You need to leave your home for any reason and will be in public areas
- You are visiting a medical facility
- You have symptoms and other people are present in the same room as you

How to put on a face mask

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser before touching the mask.
2. Remove a mask from the box and make sure there are no obvious tears or holes on either side.
3. Determine which side of the mask is the top. The side of the mask that has a stiff bendable edge is the top and is meant to mould to the shape of your nose.
4. Determine which side of the mask is the front. The coloured side of the mask is usually the front and should face away from you, while the white side touches your face.
5. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using.
 - *Face Mask with Ear loops:* Hold the mask by the ear loops. Place a loop around each ear.
 - *Face Mask with Ties:* Bring the mask to your nose level and place the ties over the crown of your head and secure with a bow.
 - *Face Mask with Bands:* Hold the mask in your hand with the nosepiece or top of the mask at fingertips, allowing the headbands to hang freely below hands. Bring the mask to your nose level and pull the top strap over your head so that it rests over the crown of your head. Pull the bottom strap over your head so that it rests at the nape of your neck.
6. Mould or pinch the stiff edge to the shape of your nose.
7. If using a face mask with ties – take the bottom ties, one in each hand, and secure with a bow at the nape of your neck.
8. Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin.

Fit check steps

1. Place the respirator on your face.
2. Place the headband or ties over your head and at the base of your neck.
3. Compress the respirator to ensure a seal across your face, cheeks and the bridge of your nose.
4. Check the positive pressure seal of the respirator by gently exhaling. If air escapes, the respirator needs to be adjusted.
5. Check the negative pressure seal of the respirator by gently inhaling. If the respirator is not drawn in towards your face, or air leaks around the face seal, readjust the respirator and repeat process, or check for defects in the respirator.
6. Always refer to the manufacturer's instructions for fit checking of individual brands and types of P2/N95 respirators.

Maintaining the fit and protection from airborne particles

Once you have fitted the P2/N95 mask be careful not to compromise the fit (and your protection).

Don't:

- touch the mask while it is being worn
- reapply the mask after it has been removed
- leave the mask dangling around your neck

Do:

- change the mask when it becomes moist
- wash your hands if you touch or dispose of a used mask
- wait until you are outside the patient care area before removing the mask
- dispose of used masks in a closed receptacle

How to remove a face mask

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser before touching the mask. Avoid touching the front of the mask. The front of the mask is contaminated. Only touch the ear loops/ties/band. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using.
 - *Face Mask with Ear loops:* Hold both of the ear loops and gently lift and remove the mask.
 - *Face Mask with Ties:* Untie the bottom bow first then untie the top bow and pull the mask away from you as the ties are loosened.
 - *Face Mask with Bands:* Lift the bottom strap over your head first then pull the top strap over your head.
2. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser.