Guidance on Face Coverings

Based on recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and the Oregon Health Authority, the University highly recommends the use of cloth face coverings in facilities, public settings, and situations where six foot distancing measures are difficult to maintain. The use of cloth face coverings may help slow the spread of COVID-19, including the viral spread from people who are asymptomatic (infected but are not showing symptoms).

Employees and others shall utilize cloth face coverings if required by governor’s executive order, or any applicable local, state, or federal law, regulation, policy, or administrative rule or as circumstances and settings warrant.

Note: cloth face coverings are not the same as PPE used by medical providers, first responders or a researcher working with infectious agents. PPE is intended to protect the wearer from injury or infection. Cloth face coverings, however, are intended to help protect those around the wearer by containing respiratory droplets from coughs or speaking. The CDC recommendation to the general public for wearing cloth face coverings is to protect others in case you are transmitting COVID-19 asymptomatically.

The Office of Environmental Health and Safety asks employees report to their supervisor any situation in which physical distancing is not possible. The supervisors and the university will attempt to mitigate such situations. In work-related situations that require physical distance of less than six feet, such as cooperative lifting of heavy objects, the supervisors/university will provide appropriate face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) as required.

Cloth face coverings can be made at home from common materials at low cost. The CDC offers written guidance as well as a how-to video.

The CDC and OHA emphasize that the use of cloth face coverings do not change the need to:

- maintain at least six-feet distancing from others
- cover coughing and sneezing
- frequent hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- cleaning surfaces often
- not touching your face, eyes, nose or mouth
- monitoring your health
- staying home and isolate yourself when ill until 72 hours after both fever and cough have gone away without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

Additional resources are available on the university’s COVID-19 Resources and Updates website.

All members of the OSU community need to do their part in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
## Understanding the Difference: Homemade Masks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N95 Respirator</th>
<th>Surgical Mask</th>
<th>Homemade Mask or Paper Mask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
<td>Health Care Workers</td>
<td>Health Care Workers and patients in healthcare settings</td>
<td>General Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Factor</td>
<td>High Risk Situations</td>
<td>Moderate Risk Situations</td>
<td>Low Risk Situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Designed to protect the person wearing the mask from aerosols, splatter, sprays, or blood.</td>
<td>Designed for health care workers to stop droplets being spread by the wearer – NOT to protect the wearer from breathing in aerosols.</td>
<td>Designed to contain coughs and sneezes and prevent disease transmission to others – NOT to protect the wearer from breathing in aerosols.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 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.  
|                  |                                                                               |                                                                               | - 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. | Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse. Both are important and viable options when supplies are limited. | Homemade/Cloth Masks:  
|                  | Extended use is preferable. Follow CDC guidance on [Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment](https://www.cdc.gov/ einerprises/ppe/guidance.html) | Extended use is preferable. Follow CDC guidance on [Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment](https://www.cdc.gov/ einerprises/ppe/guidance.html) | - 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.

Reference: Pennsylvania Department of Health, Understanding the Differences Homemade Masks  
[https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Stop-the-Spread.aspx](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/coronavirus/Pages/Stop-the-Spread.aspx)