

YOUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

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COVID-19 Edition

Are You Wearing a Mask During the Pandemic?

CDC has recently suggested that wearing a mask out in public may slow the transmission of COVID-19. This is not a green light to go out in public more than you need to. It is important to note that wearing a mask does not replace recommendations of hand washing and social distancing. There are a few different masks out there including: N95 respirator, surgical mask, and homemade cloth masks. It is recommended that the N95 respirators be reserved for healthcare workers on the frontlines. There is also a very limited supply/shortage of surgical masks (intended to minimize exposure to splash) that should be reserved for healthcare workers, as well. Homemade cloth masks/coverings have been recommended for the general public by the CDC. Essentially, if a mask is worn properly, it could prevent large particles from reaching another person, if you were to sneeze or cough near someone. This is not a situation where you are being solely protected from getting Covid-19.

Let me explain. Cloth masks are not respirators. If you are wearing an N95 respirator, to ensure proper fit and seal, you must be fit-tested. Covid-19/coronavirus is considered airborne, meaning the virus can stay active in the air for up to 3 hours. It is also transmitted by contact, staying alive on surfaces for up to 3 days. The large droplets that you get from a sneeze or cough may be minimized with wearing a mask. Essentially, the large droplets are expelled into the air and onto surfaces. Furthermore, you should still practice respiratory etiquette, coughing/sneezing in your arm. You can be without symptoms, carrying the virus around. Even though you might have allergies you could still transmit the virus to others without even knowing you have the virus. Therefore, social distancing and frequent hand washing are so important. Wearing a mask in public is just an added recommendation that may help slow the contagion.

Are You Wearing a Mask (Continued)

Did you know there is a proper way to wear a mask? It has been brought to my attention recently that many people are walking around stores with masks only covering their mouths or their chins. Here are a few key steps to consider when wearing a mask in public.

- **Wash your hands** before handling and donning on the mask, because you are going to be close to touching your face.
- When donning on the mask, **make sure that your nose and your mouth are fully covered**. If you have a mask that has a flexible piece over the nose, pinch it to ensure more coverage.
- **Don't touch** your mask again, until you are done wearing it and are ready to remove. It is considered contaminated on the outside, once you have worn in a public place. Don't take your mask off to speak to someone. Just by speaking, you disburse droplets into the air.
- Once you are done wearing the mask, **remove by the elastic bands and throw in the washer** (only cloth). **Wash your hands** after discarding your mask. Surgical and N95 masks cannot be washed. Hospitals systems are adopting new sterilization protocols to conserve N95 masks. Surgical masks are considered disposable.

Being able to wash your mask after each use, is a benefit to having cloth masks. CDC offers instruction on both sew and non-sew methods to make your own mask. Here is the link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Again, it is important to remember that masks have not been proven to protect you from getting coronavirus. They are only intended to minimize the spread by protecting others from you. You can have the virus and transmit the virus without having symptoms. Social distancing and washing your hands continue to be strongly recommended to mitigate transmission of the virus.

