Department of Public Health
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Why, When, and How to Use a Mask

Why wear a mask:

You can transmit COVID-19 coronavirus even if you don't feel sick. Some people can be contagious without even knowing that they have COVID-19.

When to use a mask:

- If you need to go to buy food or medicines
- If you have to go to work (essential workers)
- If you live or work in a group setting (shelter, group home)

*Do **not** wear a mask in order to hang out with friends or neighbors. Stay home.*

You don't need a mask to go for a walk, run, or bike ride alone or with someone else you live with as long as you stay at least 6 feet from others who are outside.

How to use a mask

- Use cloth face coverings, not surgical masks or N95 respirators
- You can make a mask at home with common items you already have.
- Make sure your mask fits well around the mouth and nose without any gaps at the sides.
- Use 2-3 layers of close-fitting fabric.
- Choose a mask that is comfortable enough for you to keep it on whenever you are in public places. Make sure you can breathe easily while wearing it.
- **Consider the outside of the mask to be dirty:** avoid touching the mask while in use and wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after removing or adjusting the mask.
- Put your cloth mask in the laundry whenever it is wet or soiled and at the end of each day.
  - Fabric face masks can be washed with ordinary detergent and do not have to be separated from other laundry.
- Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Face shields can be worn with cloth masks for those who want additional protection or instead of cloth masks for those who are uncomfortable breathing in a mask.