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. Remember that washing hands and keeping away from others are still important even though you are wearing a mask.

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)
- If you ride public transportation or use a ride share service

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

When you do not need a mask
- You don’t need a mask to go for a walk, run, or bike ride alone or with someone you live with if and only if you stay at least 6 feet from others.
  - Choose places to exercise where you have room to keep your distance.
  - Wear a gaiter or bandana around your neck and pull it up over your mouth and nose if you will be passing someone else and cannot maintain distance.
- You don’t need to wear a mask if you are driving alone. But bring one along for when you reach your destination.
- When eating and drinking: Make sure to keep distance from co-workers and others.

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
- 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.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after removing or adjusting the mask.
- Wash your mask in the regular laundry daily and whenever wet or soiled.
- 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.

Visit www.phila.gov/COVID for more information • Text COVIDPHL to 888-777 to receive updates to your phone • Call (800) 722-7112 to speak to a health care professional on the Greater Philadelphia Coronavirus Helpline