



Understanding the Difference Between Face Masks

	N95 Respirator	Surgical Mask	Homemade Mask or Paper Mask
Image			
User	Health Care Workers (includes In-Home Personal Assistants)	Health Care Workers and patients/consumers in health care settings (includes Residential Settings)	General Public (includes clear face shield to communicate with people who read lips)
Risk Factor	High Risk Situations	Moderate Risk Situations	Low Risk Situations
Design	PROTECT THE WORKER. Designed to protect the person wearing the mask from aerosols, splatter, sprays, or blood.	PROTECT THE PATIENT/CONSUMER. Designed for health care workers to stop droplets being spread by the wearer – NOT to protect the wearer from breathing in aerosols.	PROTECT OTHER PEOPLE. Designed to contain coughs and sneezes and prevent disease transmission to others – NOT to protect the wearer from breathing in aerosols.
When To Wear	Recommended for use when healthcare workers care for patients/consumers with COVID-19 and performing procedures that put them most at risk of virus exposure.	Recommended for healthcare 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 is in any public situation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When coughing or sneezing. • Using public transportation. • Shopping and working at essential businesses like grocery stores and pharmacies.

How to Wear	Covering the nose and mouth, with the bottom sitting below the chin. See below for more about fit testing.	Covering the nose and mouth, with the bottom sitting below the chin.	Covering the nose and mouth, with the bottom sitting below the chin. Covering only the nose or only the mouth does not provide adequate protection. All sides should lay against the face as much as possible.
Fit Testing Required	Yes Because these masks are designed to form a seal around the wearer's face, these masks are designed only for health care workers who have been fit tested. Due to the fit, the wearer may find it hard to breathe and may not be appropriate for healthcare workers who have lung or respiratory issues.	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. Extended use is preferable. Follow CDC guidance on Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment .	Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse. Both are important and viable options when supplies are limited. Extended use is preferable. Follow CDC guidance on Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment .	Homemade/Cloth Masks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be washed after each use. • Should not be worn damp or when wet from spit or mucus.
Where to Acquire	Online Locally Local Health Department Idaho PPE Exchange	Online Locally Idaho PPE Exchange United Way of Treasure Valley – healthcare only	Online Locally Homemade United Way of Treasure Valley – healthcare only

Data Source: Pennsylvania Department of Health mask chart information.

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