



Caregiving and COVID-19: Mask Best Practices

Q: Someone outside of the family is coming into our home to help with the care of my loved one. Should they be wearing a mask? Does my loved one also need to wear a mask while in the home and receiving care?

- It's important to remember that not all people show symptoms of coronavirus when infected, but they may be able to spread the virus.
- The CDC is recommending that people keep a distance from others outside your home. Keeping distance from others is especially important for people who are higher risk of getting very sick. People coming **from** the outside **into** your home is similar to you or your loved one going outside where there are other people.
- Therefore, we recommend that anyone coming in to care for your loved one wear a mask and practice very good handwashing (for at least 20 seconds before and after providing care).
- We also recommend that your loved one wear a mask when receiving care in the home.
- The CDC also recommends that you **clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily**. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

Q: What kind of mask should they be wearing – a home-made fabric one, or one suitable for a medical setting?

- An important reminder here is that N-95 respirator masks must be reserved for health care providers working with patients with known or likely coronavirus. You should not expect that people coming in to your home would wear N-95 masks.
- Surgical masks or good homemade masks are likely similar in their effectiveness as long as these recommendations are followed for the masks. The masks should:
 - fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
 - be secured with ties or ear loops
 - include multiple layers of fabric
 - allow for breathing without restriction
 - be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>



Q: What type of fabrics should be used for home-made masks?

- The CDC recommendations include cotton, cotton/polyester, and cotton/spandex blends in their recommendations.
- As Dr. Lindell mentioned, the “light test” is a simple way to see if your fabric is tightly enough woven. Hold your fabric to a light or a sunny window and see how much light gets through. The less light coming through the better. But remember that the fabric needs to be breathable too!

One last reminder about hand washing. Masks DO NOT replace the need for regular handwashing. Here are handwashing recommendations from the CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Key Takeaways:

Follow Five Steps to Wash Your Hands the Right Way

Washing your hands is easy, and it’s one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs. Clean hands can stop germs from spreading from one person to another and throughout an entire community—from your home and workplace to childcare facilities and hospitals.

Follow these five steps every time.

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
5. **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.