

# How to properly wear two masks—and other mask-fitting tips following recent CDC advice

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New mask advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—connected with a new study—focuses on making sure masks fit correctly to better prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The CDC studied whether wearing two [masks](#) provided more protection than one and found that it did. The researchers found that wearing one mask—surgical or cloth—blocked about 40% of the particles coming toward the head that was breathing in. When a cloth mask was worn on top of a surgical mask, about 80% were blocked.

Here is a look at the CDC's advice and some tips on how to mask properly.

## Double mask

**What to do:** Layer a cloth mask on top of a surgical or medical procedure mask. This helps the entire setup fit more snugly and eliminates gaps around the sides of the face or nose. Make sure the fit is

comfortable and doesn't have gaps.

**What not to do:** Do not combine two disposable masks, which are not designed to fit tightly. Wearing more than one disposable mask at a time will not improve fit. Also, do not wear a KN95 mask, a type of filtering face-piece respirator that is commonly made in China, with any other mask.

**Cloth-mask dos:** Choose a cloth mask made of multiple layers of tightly woven, breathable fabric that also includes a nose wire, which can help improve the mask's fit. Does the mask block light when you hold it up to a bright light source? Then it's a good construction.

**Cloth mask don'ts:** Stay away from any cloth mask that includes an exhalation valve or vent, which can allow respiratory droplets to leak into or out of a mask.

## Knotted ear-loops

**What to do:** The CDC recommends knotting, folding then tucking the ear loops of 3-ply masks for a better fit—making the edges of the mask fit more tightly to your face. First, fold the mask in half lengthwise, lining up the corners and edges. Second, tie a knot with the elastic loops, as close as you can to the mask, according to an instructional video from the University of North Carolina's UNC Health. Next, bend the metal nose mold so it fits the shape of your nose. Next, the knot will make the sides of the mask near the tied ear-loops puff out. Fold those puffed-out edges in a pleat so it lays flat on your cheek. When putting on the mask make sure it fits snugly.

**What not to do:** Don't wear more than one disposable mask at one time, it will not improve fit. Handle the mask only by its ear loops, cords or

head straps—not the surface of the mask itself.

What about KN95: A KN95 shouldn't need any modifying of the straps. Ideally, this type of mask can filter up to 95% of particles in the air, however, counterfeit KN95 masks make it hard to distinguish real KN95s from fake ones just by looking at them. Do not wear a KN95 mask with an exhalation valve, which can allow respiratory droplets to leak in or out of the mask. If you have facial hair, then this type of mask might not make a good fit. Do not combine a KN95 mask with another KN95 mask or any other type of mask.

### **Nylon cover**

What to do: Other studies have found that placing a sleeve made of sheer nylon hosiery material around the neck and pulling it up over either a cloth or surgical mask significantly improved the wearer's protection by fitting the mask more tightly to the face and reducing edge gaps.

### **Mask brace**

What to do: Air leaks around the edges of a cloth or surgical mask can be reduced by layering one of these devices on top of a cloth mask for a better fit. A recent study showed that when either a solid or elastic fitter is worn over a surgical mask, then it can potentially increase the wearer's protection by 90% for aerosols. A mask brace can be purchased online or made out of rubber bands. Former Apple product design engineer Sabrina Paseman, behind [fixthemask.com](https://www.fixthemask.com), posted a tutorial that lays out the steps: First, chain three rubber bands together. Second, place the center rubber band in front of the mask around the chin and nose. Adjust fit and do a CDC seal check.

Other mask advice to keep in mind:

### **When to wear one**

? Wear a mask any time you are in a public setting. Children under the age of 2 and people who cannot wear a mask safely due to a disability or an underlying medical condition should not wear a mask.

? Masks are required on planes, buses, trains and other forms of public transportation when traveling into, within or out of the United States, as of Feb. 2.

? If you will be near people who do not live with you, wear a mask.

? If someone you live with is sick with symptoms of COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19, then wear a mask inside your home.

### **How to wear one**

? Always wash your hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on your mask and don't touch the mask while you are wearing it.

? If you wear glasses, then find a mask that fits closely over your nose or has a nose wire to help reduce fogging. You might also try to use an antifogging spray made for eyeglasses.

? Don't use a mask that is made out of fabric that makes it hard to breathe. Pass on any mask that includes an exhalation valve or vent, which could allow virus particles to escape. And, leave the N95 respirators for health care workers, the CDC says.

### **What to do in cold weather**

? Wear a mask underneath your scarf, ski mask or balaclava—these items are not replacements for a mask.

? Change your mask when it becomes wet. A wet mask is harder to breathe through, is less efficient at filtering and vents more around the edges of the mask. Keep a spare mask to replace one that becomes wet from moisture in your breath due to snow or rain.

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