

How to Choose and Wear a Mask During the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Source: Consumer Reports. By Catherine Roberts

For the outer layer, good options include material from a high-thread-count bedsheet, a double layer of bandanna material, or cotton shirting fabric. The goal is something washable and tightly woven.

If you're unsure how densely woven your fabric is, hold it up to the light—generally, the less light that gets through, the tighter the weave. Also, consider how worn the fabric is. A threadbare sheet or T-shirt might not be as good a choice as new fabric, says Timothy Sly, Ph.D., an epidemiologist and professor emeritus at the School of Public Health at Ryerson University in Toronto.

If you're looking for a mask to purchase online, make sure you can tell from the product description that it meets the criteria above: multiple layers, made with tightly woven fabric, and washable. All masks should also be easy to secure, with elastic ear loops or ties.

Ensure a good fit. A mask should fully cover your nose and mouth, extending an inch or more past the ends of your mouth and wrapping under to “grab onto the bottom of your chin as an anchor,” Solokowski says. According to the CDC, it should fit snugly but comfortably against the sides of your face and should not interfere with breathing. If your face covering gaps on the sides while tied on, you can close the gap by adding a stitch to create a dart.

Wearing and Caring for Your Face Covering

Wash up. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recommends washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are unavailable) before putting on your mask.

Don't adjust it. Refrain from touching your mask while you're wearing it—and don't pull it down to speak or take a drink or remove it and then put it back on. Although a face covering is primarily for protecting other people in the event that you have COVID-19, it's possible that someone else's virus-containing droplets could end up on the outside of your mask in a crowded place like a grocery store.

Remove carefully. Wash your hands before taking your face covering off, say the experts at National Jewish Health hospital in Denver. And avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth during removal, the CDC advises. Touch only the mask's ties or elastic. If you inserted a disposable filter, throw it out. NYC health officials recommend that you place your mask where no one will touch it and where it won't touch other surfaces, such as countertops. Then wash your hands again.

Clean thoroughly. The California Department of Public Health recommends that before you reuse your mask, run it through a wash and dry cycle, or hand wash with soap and water. And let it dry completely before you use it again. You may want to have several masks so that you can rotate them, New York health officials suggest.