PART TWO

SEPTEMBER 2020

COMPREHENDING COVID

A TRI-BETA PANDEMIC NEWSLETTER

ARTICLES AND FEATURES

The Importance of Wearing a Mask Properly

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, masks have become vital essentials for everyday tasks, such as trips to work, stores, school, and those places where you may come in contact with other individuals. As the pandemic progressed, however, many people stopped wearing their masks correctly, which puts not only themselves, but others at risk of contracting this virus.

When talking about the right way to wear a mask, it is important to identify why sporting one correctly is imperative. When wearing a mask, it is essential to cover both your nose and mouth as this "ensures that your respiratory droplets or nasal mucus remains within your mask." According to the CDC, COVID-19 spreads through these droplets, which are expelled from a person's body when they talk, sneeze, cough, or even breathe.

Your respiratory tract is connected through both your nose and mouth, and if you only cover one, the other can still take in or release COVID-19. Please be aware that there are plenty of high-risk individuals around you, including the elderly and people with medical issues, such as diabetes.

Just because someone else is wearing a mask does not mean that you don't have too. If a carrier is not wearing a mask, there is a high risk of transmission, but if both the carrier and those around him/her are wearing masks, then there is a much lower chance that the disease gets passed along.

For more information regarding mask wearing and COVID-19, visit the CDC website: COVID Frequently Asked Questions.

How Effective is My Mask?

One question you may be asking yourself and others is: how effective is the mask I am wearing? With the increase in importance of wearing a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19, there has been a rise in the different types of masks available to us on the market. The CDC offers **these guidelines** that you should follow in selecting a mask to ensure that your mask is protecting both yourself and others.

When considering mask material, one should choose a mask that has two or more layers of washable and breathable fabric. The mask should be snug and completely cover your nose and mouth, and leave no gaps on the side of your face. For people who wear glasses, it is recommended to wear a mask with a wire nose-bridge so the mask can fit the nose and prevent fogging. The CDC also recommends avoiding masks made of hard to breathe fabric (such as vinyl) and masks with exhalation valves or vents, as this allows particles to escape.

While wearing a mask that follows these CDC guidelines is important, wearing the mask properly is important as well. When wearing a mask, one should avoid wearing the mask under the nose, on the chin, or in any other fashion that exposes the nose and the mouth. Also, keep in mind to be consistent in cleaning your hands before and after handling your mask. For more details about the guidelines presented above, please visit **here** for more information!
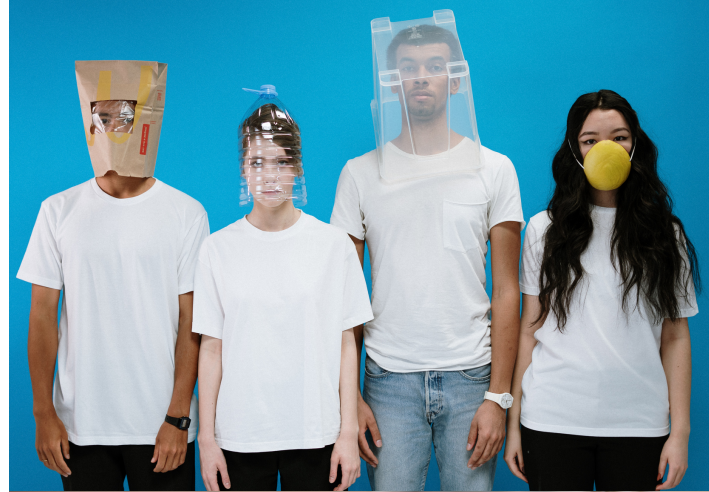
Face Mask Accessibility: Ways to Make Face Masks Inclusive for All Cultures and Abilities

Communication has a direct correlation to culture. Communication is used to express yourself, your beliefs, preferences and desires that define an individual. While masks may hinder our ability to express ourselves and communicate to others, certain companies and individuals have created ways to maintain cultural identity while wearing a mask. Others have created masks to accommodate people of different abilities.

Halima Aden, a 22-year old model and activist, collaborated with Anywear and came up with a creative way to help hijab and turban wearers. She designed a hijab and turban that comes with matching face coverings. The face coverings can be easily worn using the built-in mask extender that allows the face mask to be securely fastened behind the head, rather than attached to the ears.

Many people find it difficult to wear masks due to the lack of diversity in sizes. The Banding Together Project by Allure addressed that by creating headbands with buttons that secure face masks. These headbands are helpful in allowing people to comfortably wear a face mask, without having to secure the face mask straps behind the ears.

One of the biggest challenges posed by wearing a mask is the absence of facial expression. Expression is a significant part of communication and without it we may sometimes misinterpret others' intentions. To solve this problem, a variety of companies have created different versions of a clear face mask. These can be very beneficial for people where seeing facial expressions or reading lips is important and helps with comprehension, like individuals who are hearing impaired, people who speak different languages or dialects, or those who work with children.

How to Make Your Own Mask

1. Fold washable, breathable fabric in half.
2. Fold top down. Fold bottom up.
3. Place rubber bands or hair ties about 6 inches apart.
4. Fold side to the middle and tuck.
5.
6.
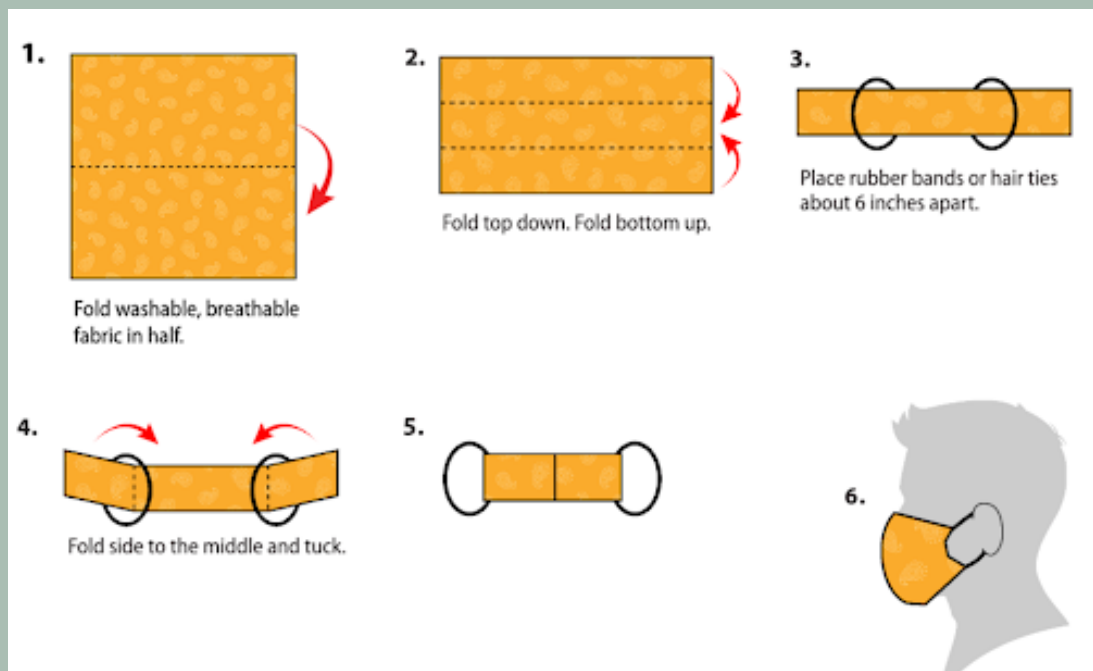
Due to a lack of medical-grade personal protective equipment, homemade face masks are an effective alternative. Simple masks can be made from breathable and washable fabric found in your home.

A recent study has shown that the material, construction, and quality of fabric is important in terms of how effective your mask is. Ultimately, "Verma and his colleagues determined that the most effective homemade masks were those that were well-fitted with multiple layers of quilting fabric." Similarly, the CDC recommends tightly woven cotton such as quilting fabric or cotton sheets. Ineffective masks include bandanas, handkerchiefs, and single layered masks.

The materials needed for this non-sewn mask include washable, breathable fabric, hair ties, and scissors. First, cut the fabric approximately 20" x 20". Next, fold the fabric in half. Then, fold the top of the fabric down and the bottom of the fabric up. Lastly, place the hair ties about 6 inches apart and fold the sides to the middle and tuck.

Your new homemade mask should cover your mouth and nose, include multiple layers of fabric, allow for breathing without restriction, and fit snugly and comfortably around the mouth.

For more information, visit: How to Make Your Own Mask!

Proper Mask Cleaning and Care

With many people now moving away from disposable masks and buying or making their own cloth mask, it is important that we know how to properly care for and clean them. It is a good idea to have more than one mask, and how many you need will depend on the amount of time you spend in settings where a face covering is needed. Johns Hopkins Medicine says that you should be washing your face mask after every wearing.

There are two ways that you can wash your mask. You can use a washing machine, or you can wash it by hand. When using a washing machine, it is suitable to include it in your regular load of laundry. You should use regular laundry detergent and the warmest water setting possible for cloth fabric. When hand washing your mask, you should use bleach containing 5.25%–8.25% sodium hypochlorite. Mix 4 teaspoons of the bleach per quart of room temperature water, or 5 tablespoons per gallon. Allow the mask to soak for five minutes. The mask can then be dried using the highest heat setting in a dryer or by laying it completely flat to air dry. For more information on how to properly care for your mask, visit...

Coronavirus: How to Care for Your Face Mask
CDC: How to Wash Masks