

# Should I wear a face mask to prevent COVID-19?

June 1, 2020 By Liz Highleyman

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone [should wear cloth face masks](#) when in contact with the public to reduce transmission of the new coronavirus. Some states and many businesses now require mask use.

Public health officials had previously said that people should not routinely wear masks unless they have symptoms or are caring for someone who is ill. The change was based in part on growing evidence that people can transmit the virus even before they show any symptoms.

While they are in short supply, N95 and medical masks should be reserved for health care providers and other front-line workers. Cloth masks do not filter out viruses, but they do block virus-containing droplets expelled when people cough, sneeze or talk. Studies have shown that masks reduce the release of respiratory viruses by the wearer.

Homemade masks made from a double layer of heavy-duty cotton appear to work well. But even a bandanna or cut-up T-shirt can reduce the spread of virus-containing droplets. Make sure your mask fits snugly and completely covers your mouth and nose.

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