

BACKGROUND

The 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person-to-person. Facemasks and respirators offer a physical barrier to contact with respiratory droplets and aerosols. When used correctly, masks, along with other preventative measures such as hand washing, and social distancing reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission leading to COVID-19 infection.

WHAT KIND OF MASKS ARE THERE?

There are several different types of masks and each has their own purpose:

- **Homemade Mask-** Homemade masks are designed to contain coughs and sneezes and prevent the disease from spreading to others. These are recommended for the general public when a person can't perform social distancing. Use these masks if you are coughing or sneezing, using public transportation or shopping and working at essential businesses like grocery stores and pharmacies. Homemade masks or cloth masks should be washed after each use and should not be worn when damp or wet.
- **Surgical Mask-** Surgical masks are designed for health care workers to stop aerosols from being spread by the person wearing it. These are recommended for health care providers during single or multiple patient interactions or routine health procedures. Surgical masks are also recommended when N95 masks are not available. Ideally these should be discarded after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse. Both are important and viable options when supplies are limited.
- **N95 Respirator-** N95 Respirators are designed for health care workers in high risk situations and protect the person wearing them from aerosols, splatter, sprays or blood. These are recommended for health care providers who are performing procedures that put them most at risk of being exposed to the virus. Ideally these should be thrown away after each patient encounter. Extended use is preferable to reuse. Both are important and viable options when supplies are limited.

WHAT KIND OF MASK SHOULD I WEAR?

- I am a member of the general public—I should wear a **HOMEMADE** mask. I can make my own mask or use a scarf or bandana.
- I am a healthcare worker in a moderate risk situation or a patient in a healthcare setting—I should wear a **SURGICAL MASK**.
- I am a healthcare worker in a high-risk situation—I should wear a **N95 RESPIRATOR**.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on masks, follow CDC guidance on [Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE Equipment](#)

For more information on COVID-19 in Pennsylvania, visit

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>.

The latest information on the coronavirus in the U.S. and worldwide can be found on the [CDC website](#).

Additional information from the CDC on what to do if you are sick can be found [here](#).

Help is available, contact the Crisis Text Line by texting **PA to 741-741**.