

Thank you to all who contributed in compiling the information below regarding the benefits and necessity of wearing face masks, strongly advised by the CDC.

The wearing of face masks in public places is now strongly recommended. Homemade cloth face masks are indeed protective. The extent of protection varies with material and kind in reducing viral exposure but does add a significant margin of safety to hand-washing and social distancing.

4 layers is optimal for cloth face masks and the thinner the material, the less effective. A good rule of thumb is if light easily passes through it, and you can see the fibers, it is not a good fabric; a 600-count cotton pillowcase is better than a bandana. Alternating the cloth with filter material such as vacuum bags, air filters, even coffee filters, has shown effective if it does not interfere with breathing. Make sure that the cloth material is next to your face, so you are not inadvertently inhaling fibers from the filter materials.

There is another important benefit to face masks, especially in this community with its high percentage of older people. Everyone should know by now that it is possible to carry the virus without symptoms. Anyone who visits a vulnerable individual, whether for a friendly chat or even to drop off necessities at the door, needs to be wearing a mask. The same is true whenever we are in a shared public space, even “just” the Post Office, the Market, or on any other little errand. Each of us depends on the other for this margin of safety.

Almost everyone can make enough masks for their own household: one or two masks per person (wash in hot water between uses, and when dry keep in paper bags, not ziplocs). A pattern for a sewn mask is here: <https://sarahmaker.com/how-to-sew-a-surgical-face-mask-for-hospitals-free-pattern> (note: this is not really for hospitals, but it is a good mask.)

A pattern for a no-sew mask is here: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=VqHHViHKfrg>

Both have size measurements to fit adults and children. There are hundreds more on-line, as well. Choose a tightly woven, smooth material if you can. If you have blue shop towels at home, they make excellent filters to tuck inside a mask. Remember, “my mask protects you; your mask protects me.”