

Use of face masks

A face mask can prevent you from infecting others and reduce the risk of becoming infected yourself. If you use it incorrectly, the chance of you getting infected will increase.

In this article, we describe the difference between medical and cloth face masks, when to use a face mask, and how to use it correctly.

1) When to use a face mask

The Government will issue advice on when and where to use a face mask. Requirements for the use of face masks will vary with the infection situation in different municipalities. Keep an eye on www.fhi.no and www.helsenorge.no for updates.

Recommendation on the use of face masks applicable throughout the Covid-19 pandemic:

The authorities recommend that face masks be used in the following situations (until further notice):

- When people who are infected or have symptoms of Covid-19 need to interrupt their isolation to travel to and from the health institution or for testing.
- When people arrive in Norway by plane from “red” countries, the face mask from the flight should be kept on until they get to the place where the quarantine check is to be performed.
- When friends or relatives cannot maintain a distance of at least one metre from a person with suspected or diagnosed Covid-19 in need of care or attention.

2) What is the difference between medical and cloth face masks?

We distinguish between medical and cloth face masks. Here are the definitions we use:

- **Medical face mask:** Face mask manufactured for use by health workers and meeting the applicable standards. When you need to wear a face mask, use a type 1 mask. Type 2 should be reserved for health workers.
- **Cloth face mask:** Homemade or factory-produced face mask made of cloth or other washable material. Cloth face masks are not governed by any standards, and their filtration performance (degree of protection) is unknown.

The research indicates that a cloth mask is less effective than a medical face mask, and that there is a wide variation according to the type of material and fit.

3) Who should not use a face mask:

- Children under 2 years of age **should not** use a face mask
- Children attending primary school (years 1 to 7) and those younger than this are not advised to wear a face mask
- Adults who have medical or other conditions that make it difficult for them to wear a face mask. You can ask your GP if you think this applies to you.

4) Advice for people using face masks

Even if you are wearing a medical or cloth face mask, always

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often
- Keep a good distance from others
- Stay at home if you are ill
- Show tolerance to others who cannot use a face mask

How to use a medical face mask correctly

- Wash your hands before you put on the face mask.
- Hold the elastic band on the sides of the face mask and fasten it behind your ears. Avoid touching the face mask itself with your hands when you put it on.
- Make sure the face mask fits tight to your face and covers your nose and chin.
- Use each face mask only once.
- Change to a fresh face mask if it gets damp or if you take it off to eat etc.
- Throw the used face mask into a bin the moment you take it off.
- Wash your hands after removing or touching the face mask.

How to use a cloth face mask correctly

- Wash your hands before you put on a cloth face mask.
- Hold the elastic band on the sides of the cloth face mask and fasten it behind your ears. Avoid touching the cloth face mask itself with your hands when you put it on.
- Make sure the cloth face mask fits tight to your face and covers your nose.
- Change to a clean cloth face mask if it gets damp or if you take it off to eat etc.
- Wash your hands after removing or touching the cloth face mask.
- Store the used cloth face mask in a closed plastic bag until you can wash it.
- Cloth face masks must be washed at 60 degrees between uses.

Incorrect use of a face mask may increase your chance of getting infected

Here are some rules of thumb for how not to use a face mask:

- Don't move the face mask onto your chin.
- Don't move the face mask beneath your nose.
- Don't move the face mask over your forehead.
- Don't cross the elastic.
- Don't touch the face mask with unwashed hands.
- Don't have the face mask halfway on.
- Don't carry the face mask on your arm.

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- Don't take the face mask off and put it on again several times.