

Guidance for Patient Use of a Medical Face Mask

Your healthcare provider has recommended that you wear a face mask when coming to your oncology appointments, medical tests, radiology test/procedures, surgical operations or procedures and inpatient hospital admissions.

What is a face mask used for?

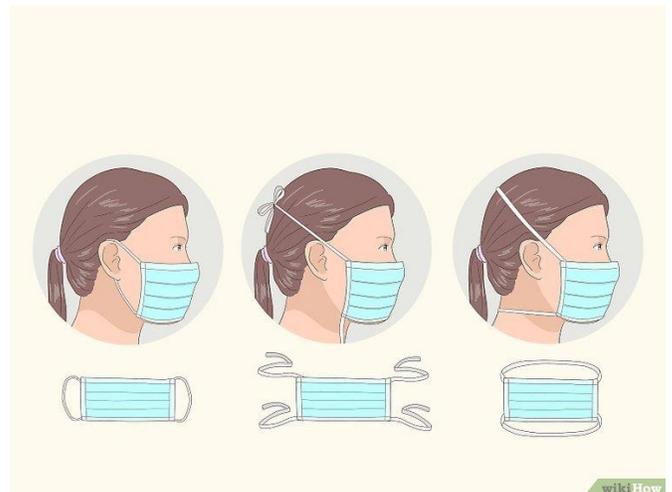
Medical face masks are used to help limit the spread of germs, which are released as droplets into the air when someone talks, sneezes or coughs. Face masks used for this purpose are also called **surgical, procedure, or isolation masks**. There are many different types of brands of face masks, and they come in many colors. **In this handout, we are referring to paper, or disposable, face masks.** We are not referring to respirators or N95 masks.

How to put on and remove your face mask

If you purchased a face mask on your own, it is important to check that they are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (also called the FDA). Please follow the product (manufacturer's) instructions for how to put on and store the masks, if provided. If instructions for putting on and removing a face mask are not provided, then follow these steps below:

How to put on a face mask:

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer before touching the mask.
2. Take the mask out of the box and make sure there are no obvious tears or holes in either side of the mask.
3. Determine which side of the mask is the top. The side of the mask that has a stiff bendable edge is the top and is meant to mold to the shape of your nose.
4. Determine which side of the mask is the front. The colored side of the mask is usually the front and should face away from you, while the white side touches your face.
5. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using:
 - **Face Mask with Ear loops:** Hold the mask by the ear loops. Place a loop around each ear.
 - **Face Mask with Ties:** Bring the mask to your nose level and place the ties over the crown of your head and secure with a bow.
 - **Face Mask with Bands:** Hold the mask in your hand with the nosepiece or top of the mask at fingertips, allowing the headbands to hang freely below hands. Bring the mask to your nose level and pull the top strap over your head so that it rests over the crown of your head. Pull the bottom strap over your head so that it rests at the nape of your neck.



6. Mold or pinch the stiff edge to the shape of your nose.
7. If using a face mask with ties: Then take the bottom ties, one in each hand, and secure with a bow at the nape of your neck.
8. Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin.

How to remove a face mask:

1. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer before touching the mask.
2. Avoid touching the front of the mask. The front of the mask is contaminated. Only touch the ear loops/ties/band. Follow the instructions below for the type of mask you are using.
 - Face Mask with Ear loops: Hold both of the ear loops and gently lift and remove the mask.
 - Face Mask with Ties: Untie the bottom bow first then untie the top bow and pull the mask away from you as the ties are loosened.
 - Face Mask with Bands: Lift the bottom strap over your head and then pull the top strap over your head.
3. Throw the mask in the trash. In non-medical settings, place the mask by itself inside a plastic bag. Tie the plastic bag closed and then throw the bag in the garbage bin
4. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.



Guidance on reuse of a disposable face mask

As much as possible, face masks should be used one time (for example, for one trip to the doctor or treatment), and then disposed. But if you have to reuse your face mask, please follow these recommendations for limited reuse:

- Hang your face mask on a hook in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, breathable container such as a paper bag between uses. This helps the mask to dry out in between uses.
- If several persons in your household also are re-using face masks, make sure to, store the face masks so that they do not touch each other. This helps prevent your mask becoming contaminated by another person's mask.
- Clearly label the paper bag/hook with name of the person using the face mask.
- Paper bag should be disposed of after each use.
- Face masks should not be re-used if soiled, ripped, or damaged.
- If stored properly, and are not soiled or damaged, face masks may be reused for up to 5 uses.

Questions?

Contact your Smilow Health Care Team or the Yale New Haven Health COVID-19 call center at 203-688-1700 every day between 7 am and 7 pm.

References:

- CT Department of Health at: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/COVID-19/COVID-19_Optimizing_PPE_Updated_Recommendations_and_Homemade_Masks_FINAL_4_3_2020_krb.pdf?la=en
- San Francisco Department of Public Health at: <https://www.sfgdcp.org/communicable-disease/healthy-habits/how-to-put-on-and-remove-a-face-mask/>
- 3 Ways to Put on Medical Face Mask at: <https://www.wikihow.com/Put-on-a-Medical-Mask#>
- CDC Guidelines for the Limited Reuse of N95 respirators: <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Images provided with permission from www.wikiHow.