

How effective are cloth masks?

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning much about it, including the most effective ways to prevent its transmission.

There is evidence that wearing a cloth mask provides protection to both the individual wearing it as well as others around them.



MASK EFFECTIVENESS

We have learned that as many as **40% of people infected with the virus that causes COVID-19 may have no symptoms**. But when they talk, cough or sneeze, they spread the virus to others in the form of respiratory droplets.



Masks keep the droplets inside the mask, which is important due to the high number of people who are infected but don't show symptoms or their symptoms have not yet occurred.



INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS

Use multiple layers of fabric. Use fabric combinations like cotton-silk, cotton-chiffon, or cotton-flannel. High thread count fabrics are most effective.



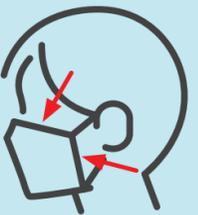
Keep your mask clean. Wash your cloth mask after each use, or at least daily. It's best to wash in hot water, but if you can't, make sure to dry it using the hot setting of your dryer.



Test your mask fabric by holding it up to the light. If you can easily see the outline of the individual fibers, it's not going to make a great filter.

AVOID

GAPS: your mask should fit snugly but not so tight that it impairs your breathing. The idea is to trap your droplets inside the mask and to not let them seep out the sides of the mask. This is why it is so important to wear it over your nose and mouth as they produce the droplets.



VALVES: Do not use masks with exhalation valves. The valve makes it easier to breathe out, but it also releases your droplets into the air, so it doesn't protect others if you're contagious. Protecting others is the primary reason to wear a mask.



Remember, there are people who should **NOT** use cloth face coverings: children under 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the masks without help.

Remember, face coverings should cover both the nose and mouth and fit snugly but comfortably against the sides of the face.



ORANGE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

www.orangecountync.gov/Masks