



On January 14, 2022, the CDC updated their [masking guidelines](#) stating respirators such as N95 and KN95 “offer the highest level of protection.”

### MASK BASICS

1. **Masks protect the wearer** even when others around them are not wearing masks.
2. Masks are only effective if they **fit close to the face** (without gaps) and cover the nose and mouth. Remember to keep nose and mouth covered. A nose wire or clip in the mask ensures a close fit.
3. **Mask effectiveness**, from least to best:
  - a. Single layer cloth mask
  - b. Double layer cloth mask
  - c. Double layer cloth mask with a filter inserted (to purchase online, search “Filters for cloth face masks”)
  - d. Single surgical mask
  - e. Surgical mask under cloth mask
  - f. KN95 mask
  - g. N95 masks
    - i. **NOTE:** N95s and KN95s are both rated to capture 95% of particles. Among the minor differences, only KN95 masks are required to pass fit tests, while N95 masks have slightly stronger breathability standards. The more contagious COVID-19 omicron variant has put a spotlight on more effective masks such as N95 and KN95 masks. The CDC clarified that people can use these respirators for regular use and that there is little supply shortage.
    - ii. **The US government is shipping supplies of free N95 masks this week to their Federal Pharmacy partners.** The public will be able to pick up free masks at local pharmacies such as CVS and Walgreens **starting around January 28.**
4. The “**knot and tuck**” method improves the protection of a surgical mask.
5. **Men with beards should use a mask fitter or brace and/or a surgical mask covered by a cloth mask** to enhance fit.
6. In **indoor places with more people and more enclosed spaces use higher efficiency masks** and combinations of masks to give you the best possible protection.
7. The **Omicron variant makes covering the nose as well as the mouth** important because it readily infects the upper airways
8. When removing the mask, remember that there are viral particles on the outside of the mask, **so remove with the mask by the strings, avoid touching the outside of the mask**, avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth **and use hand sanitizer or wash your hands as soon as possible.**

9. **Replace your mask as soon as it begins to show signs of wear** – elastic strings no longer hold it tight to the face, it becomes wet (as after exercising).
10. **Keep masks on hand** so they are readily available when you need them.
11. **Face masks for children:** [St. Jude Children's Research Hospital](#) recommends children wear the white, “duck-bill N95 masks” because cloth masks do not provide the same level of protection and should not be used." The white duck-bill N-95 mask, shaped like a duck’s bill, comes in two sizes, small and regular. The design was created to offer more breathability.

For the CDC Guide to Masks, click here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>