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CORONAVIRUS

How To Clean A Fabric Coronavirus Face Mask And How Often

Washing face masks is just as important as wearing them to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

By **Vartika Puranik**

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As we continue our fight against the [coronavirus](#) pandemic, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recommend [wearing a face mask](#) in public when shopping for essential items. It is especially advisable for people living in areas hit hard by the spread of the COVID-19 disease. But there's one thing many people don't realize: Washing face masks is as important as wearing them.

Ever since the global pandemic hit us, researchers have been studying how long the virus can live on various surfaces. A new report published in [The Lancet](#) says the infectious virus could still be present on the outer layer of a mask for up to several days.

“Strikingly, a detectable level of the infectious virus could still be present on the outer layer of a surgical mask on day 7,” the researchers wrote. They also concluded that various disinfectants can be used to kill the novel coronavirus if you clean the mask properly.

We reached out to some experts to find out how to effectively wash face masks.

Is your mask susceptible to the virus?

[Homemade masks](#) are definitely susceptible to viruses. Wearing a mask reduces the concentration of virus particles that can be inhaled from respiratory droplets, which in turn reduces the transmission of COVID-19, but masks can also carry the virus.

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“Cotton cloth is not designed to fully filter virus particles in the nanometer range. However, it could be very helpful for asymptomatic individuals who would normally be wearing nothing,” said [Rodney Rohde](#), associate dean for research at the College of Health Professions at Texas State University.

[Dimitar Marinov](#), assistant professor in the department of hygiene at the [Medical University of Varna](#), told HuffPost that up to 97% of the air’s virus particles can easily penetrate cloth masks.



Face Mask Tutoria

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“This is why we advise the use of cloth masks as a method to protect others b not for self-protection,” he added.

How often should we wash our masks?

The CDC recommends washing your mask at least once a day. “It should be washed typically when you are done with it,” Rhode said.

[Robert Amler](#), dean of the School of Health Sciences and Practice at New York Medical College and a former CDC chief medical officer, suggested washing y fabric mask after every use. “Avoid touching your face and wash your hands before and after,” he said.

[Emily de Golian](#), a board-certified dermatologist at Dermatology Consultant Georgia, told us that, ideally, masks shouldn’t be worn for more than 30 min because the dampness from our breath makes it less effective as a barrier ag: coronavirus transmission.

If you're a frontline worker or spend your time in public where social distance measures are difficult to maintain, consider washing your fabric mask every hours, if possible, Marinov advised.

What's the best way to wash and dry a fabric face mask?

It is important to note that detergents with bleach-like compounds or other active ingredients should be used when washing masks. Those kill microbes more effectively than standard detergents, Rhodes explained.

Machine washing is optimal, and the material of your face mask will determine the temperature of the water. "Fabric masks can be washed in the warmest possible water that the fabric will tolerate," de Golian said.



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mind. "The temperature should be at least 60 degrees Celsius [140 degrees Fahrenheit]. We do not have studies on SARS-CoV-2, but the similar SARS-CoV-1 dies quickly at temperatures above 60," he said.

You can also disinfect masks by ironing or putting them in an oven for 20 minutes at about 160 degrees Fahrenheit, Marinov said.

If hand washing is your only option, de Golian suggested lathering the mask with soap and scrubbing them for at least 20 seconds with warm to hot water.

"Washing should be followed by hot air drying," Almer said.

Dry your mask on the highest possible heat the fabric will allow. Again, this v
depend on what material was used to construct your mask.

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