

## Annex 8a : Guidance On The Use Of Masks With Regards To Covid-19 Pandemic

Masks remain a vital part of the preventive and control measures that can limit the spread of certain respiratory viral diseases, including the recent COVID-19. Masks can be used either for protection of healthy persons or for source control (worn by the infected person to prevent onward transmission). The use of mask should be practiced along with frequent hand hygiene, social distancing and other Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This document provides general guidance on the use of medical and non – medical masks. Recommended medical masks for healthcare providers are respirators such as N95 and surgical 3 ply masks (Refer Annex 8). Other than health care workers, the surgical 3 ply masks is also indicated for those with COVID-19 symptoms and those taking care of someone suspected (PUI) or confirmed COVID-19. In areas where COVID-19 is widespread and distancing cannot be practiced, surgical 3 ply masks is recommended for vulnerable populations such as people aged  $\geq 60$  years old and people with underlying health conditions.

Non-medical masks are recommended for those without symptoms in areas where COVID-19 is widespread and distancing cannot be managed among workers such as social workers, cashiers, waiters etc. and in public settings such as public transport, workplaces, grocery stores and crowded environment.

For non – medical masks, it is recommended to use 3 layers cloth masks which comprise of:

- i) An innermost layer of a hydrophilic material (e.g. cotton or cotton blends);
- ii) An outermost layer made of hydrophobic material (e.g. polypropylene, polyester, or their blends) which may limit external contamination from penetration through to the wearer's nose and mouth;
- iii) A middle hydrophobic layer of synthetic non-woven material such as polypropylene or a cotton layer which may enhance filtration or retain droplets.

However, non-medical masks are neither a medical device nor personal protective equipment.

Masks should not be worn by children younger than 2 years old, anyone who has trouble breathing and anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance. Masks should not be shared.

Recommendation on type of mask for general public according to specific settings is shown in the table below.

Table 1; Recommendation on type of mask for general public according to specific settings

Situations/settings	Population	Purpose of mask use	Type of mask to consider wearing if recommended locally

Situations/settings	Population	Purpose of mask use	Type of mask to consider wearing if recommended locally
Areas with known or suspected widespread transmission and limited or no capacity to implement other containment measures such as physical distancing.	General population in public settings, such as grocery stores, at work, social gatherings, mass gatherings, closed settings, including schools, churches, mosques, etc.	Potential benefit for source control	Non-medical mask
Settings with high population density where physical distancing cannot be achieved.	People living in cramped conditions, and specific settings such as refugee camps, camp-like settings, slums	Potential benefit for source control	Non-medical mask
Settings where a physical distancing cannot be achieved (close contact)	General public on transportation (e.g., on a bus, plane, trains)  Specific working conditions which places the employee in close contact or potential close contact with others e.g., social workers, cashiers, servers	Potential benefit for source control	Non-medical mask
Settings where physical distancing cannot be achieved and increased risk of infection and/or negative outcomes	Vulnerable populations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People aged <math>\geq 60</math> years</li> <li>• People with underlying comorbidities, such as cardiovascular disease or diabetes mellitus, chronic lung disease, cancer, cerebrovascular disease, immunosuppression</li> </ul>	Protection	Medical mask (Surgical 3 ply mask)
Any setting in the community	Persons with any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19	Source control	Medical mask (Surgical 3 ply mask)

There are many non medical masks available in the market. They may be used however may not be as effective as the per the mask recommended by WHO.

Note: For prisons, lock ups, detention centers and shelters refer Annex 27a.

### Steps on Wearing Masks

Clean your hands before putting on masks. Inspect the masks and do not use it if damaged, wet or contaminated

#### **Medical Masks**

For medical masks i.e. 3 ply surgical masks, make sure it is worn correctly; white coloured surface should be worn inside and the tip with the metal strip should be at the top.

Hold mask by the straps and put it over nose and mouth and secure the straps over the ears. Ensure that the top of the mask is over the nose and the bottom is under the chin.

Press the metal strip on both sides of the nasal bridge until there is no gap between the mask and face for a good fit.

To remove, take the mask off by holding the straps and discard the mask directly into a lidded bin.

Medical masks can be used for four hours continuously. However if the masks supply is scarce, or it is not damaged, wet or contaminated, it can be used for the whole day.

### ***Non Medical Masks***

To don a non medical mask, hold the mask by the straps, put over the nose and mouth and secure under the chin. Make sure there is no gap in between mask and face. If it is wet, it needs to be replaced for better protection. After use, take the masks off by holding the straps only. It is recommended to wash the mask after use at the end of the day.

Inproper use of masks e.g. hanging the masks below the chin, putting it on the forehead or partially covering the nose and mouth may cause contamination and infection to the user. When the mask needs to be removed e.g. while having meals, it can be kept in a paper bag or resealable plastic bag.

## **REFERENCES**

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2. World Health Organization (2020) Guidance on Face Masks. <https://makermask.org/who-guidance-on-fabric-masks/>
3. World Health Organization (2020) .COVID-19 explainer on masks: Who should wear them, when and how. [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=3226665577378803&id=154163327962392&sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=e](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=3226665577378803&id=154163327962392&sfnsn=mo&d=n&vh=e)
4. World Health Organization (2020). How to Wear a Fabric Masks. <https://youtu.be/ciUniZGD4tY>
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020). Considerations for Wearing Cloth Face Coverings. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>