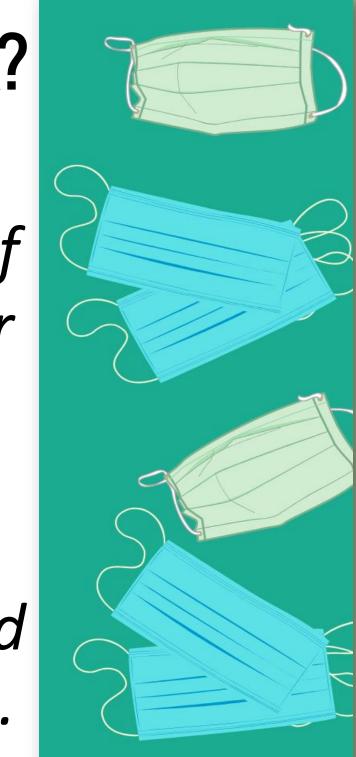In times of a COVID-19 lockdown, our safety is really in our own hands. It has been advised to absolutely avoid stepping out of the house unless essential, wearing a mask when we are in a crowded area, practicing a good form of hygiene is a good measure.

What is a mask?

A mask is worn over or in front of the face to cover nose and mouth to prevent the inhalation of fumes, or to avoid spreading germs.

Importance of Mask

When someone coughs, talks, sneezes they could release germs into the air that may infect others nearby. Mask protects from such infection. It prevents individual from contacting any airborne infectious germs as well as from the spreading of infection. It helps to eliminate cross-contamination.

How to use mask?

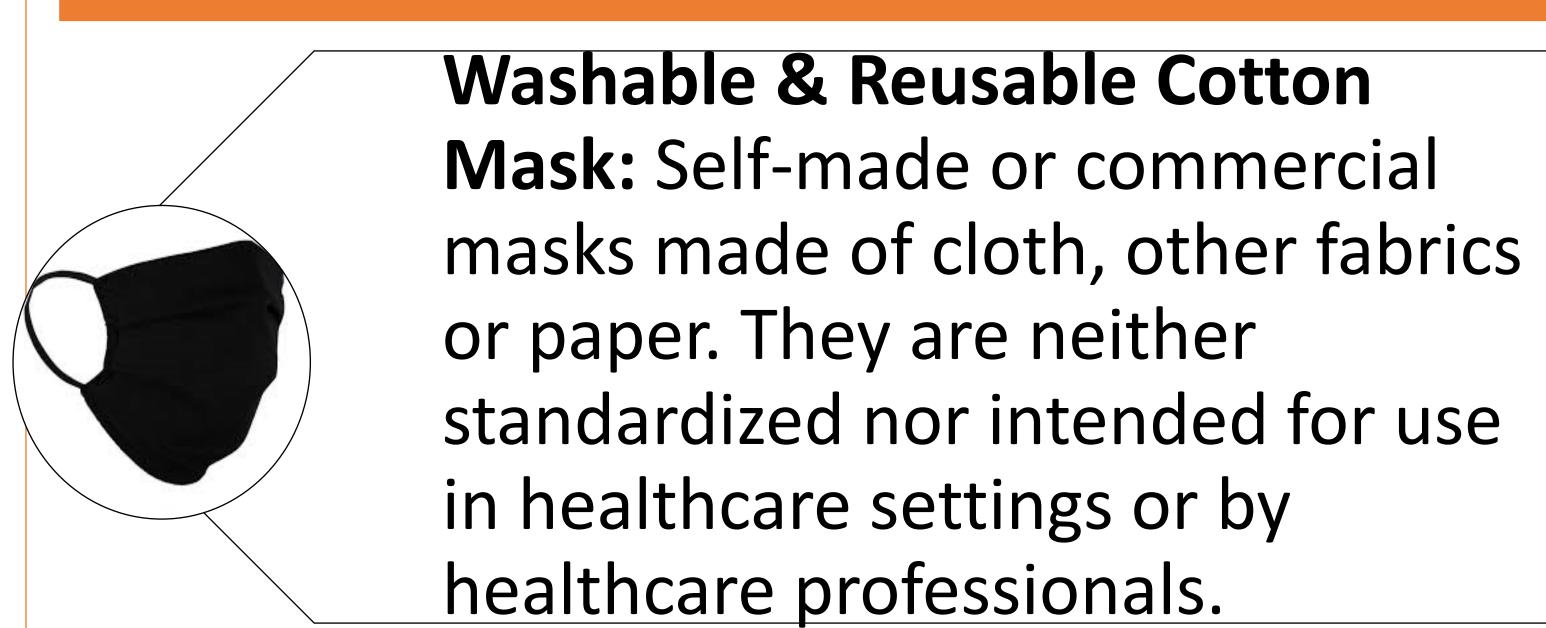Wash your hands with soap or sanitize them before wearing a mask.
Place the mask carefully, ensuring it covers the mouth & nose.
Tie it securely to minimize any gaps between the face & the mask.
Avoid touching the mask while wearing it. If you touch or adjust your mask, be sure to clean your hands immediately afterward.

When to use mask ?

- Wear cloth face masks in public settings, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission, such as grocery stores, pharmacies.
- Wear a mask, if you are coughing and sneezing
- Wear a medical mask when entering a room where patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are admitted.
- Medical Mask is must for caregivers or those sharing living space with persons suspected of 2019-nCoV infection.

TTYPES OF MASK

Masks for non-health care workers

Washable & Reusable Cotton Mask: Self-made or commercial masks made of cloth, other fabrics or paper. They are neither standardized nor intended for use in healthcare settings or by healthcare professionals.

Masks for health care workers

3 ply surgical mask: A Three-Ply Layer with the innermost layer used for absorbing moisture, the middle layer is a filter and outermost layer repels water.

N95 or N95 respirator or filtering face piece (FFP): A particulate-FFP respirator that meets the U.S. NIOSH N95 classification of air filtration, meaning that it filters at least 95% of airborne particles.

There are other effective ways besides using face masks to prevent becoming ill with COVID-19. These include *Cleaning your hands frequently, practicing social distancing* & *Being conscious of your face.*

How to remove and dispose mask safely?

For cloth mask: Do not touch the front of the mask but untie it from behind. After removal or whenever a used mask is inadvertently touched, clean hands using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap & water. Wash the cloth mask properly & hang it to air dry as it can be reused.
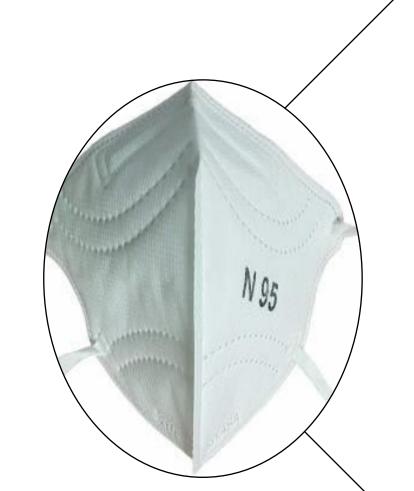
For Surgical mask (Fold, tie, wrap): It should be removed chin upwards & remove it from the strings. Be careful, not to touch the front portion while taking off the mask. Then fold it half inwards like a roll, so that droplets from mouth & nose are not exposed. The mask can also be wrapped with its ear loops so that it will not unravel. Then wrap the mask in a tissue paper or polythene bag & immediately discard it in a closed garbage bin & clean your hands afterward.
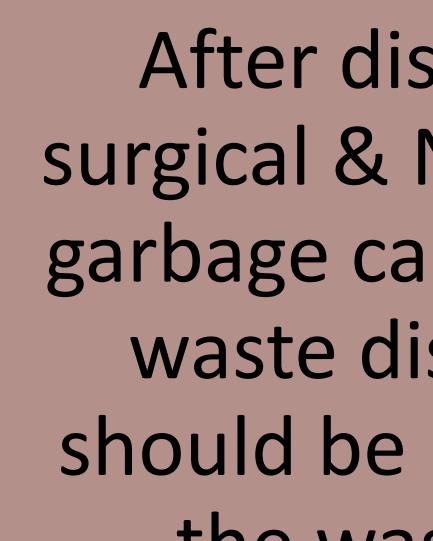
To dispose N95 respirator, hold the edge of the straps attached to take of the N95 mask. Don't touch the inside part of the respirator. Wash hands before and after it. Gently remove the mask so as not to spread contaminants on the mask. Place the mask in a plastic bag or zip-lock bag or paper bag. Secure the bag tightly. Place the plastic bag into garbage can or biomedical waste disposal unit.

Used masks should be disposed & collected separately by the waste collectors and have to be incinerated or buried at a depth of at least 10 feet from the Earth's surface in order to prevent infection.

After discarding used surgical & N95 mask in the garbage can or biomedical waste disposal unit, it should be handed over to the waste collector engaged by common biomedical waste treatment facility.

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