



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
Dave A. Chokshi, MD MSc  
*Commissioner*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Thursday, February 18, 2021**

## **MASK TO THE MAX – HEALTH DEPARTMENT UPDATES MASK GUIDANCE**

*Updated guidance for face covering includes information on fit, layering and who should consider higher grade masks*

*Face coverings remain one of the most critical tools to prevent COVID-19 and double-masking increases the level of protection to the wearer and others*

**February 18, 2021** – The Health Department today issued [updated guidance on face coverings](#) (PDF), one of the most critical tools to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The guidance recommends people over the age of two-years-old wear snug fitting masks with two or three layers of material to better prevent unfiltered air from passing through. Alternatively, [New Yorkers may wear two masks](#) (PDF), with a cloth face covering over a disposable mask. The guidance also suggests higher grade masks, like KN95s, for people at greater risk – including those 65 or older; those with an underlying medical condition; those who care for someone who is sick and people who are in prolonged close contact with non-household members while indoors.

“Masks help us face the world and each other but it’s important that we cover up correctly,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “The strategies we’re sharing today will help shield all of us from COVID-19. The most important thing remains wearing face coverings consistently and properly, covering both your nose and mouth, indoors and outdoors.”

Because not all face coverings provide the same amount of protection, New Yorkers are urged to consider the following when selecting a face covering:

- Use a face covering with two or three layers of material to better prevent unfiltered air from passing through. A cloth face covering over a disposable mask, is also recommended. However, people should not use two disposable masks. Wearing two of these masks does not help improve fit.
- Use face coverings made of tightly woven fabric (fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source). Face coverings should be made of breathable fabric (like cotton), and not of leather, plastic, or other materials that make it hard to breathe.
- Do not use a face covering with an exhalation valve as it allows unfiltered exhaled air to escape.

- Make sure the face covering fits snugly against the sides of the face and fully cover both the nose and mouth, without slipping. Face coverings that fit loosely allow respiratory droplets to enter and leak out. Here are some tips to help ensure a snug fit:
  - Wear a cloth face covering over a disposable mask.
  - Wear a face covering with a nose wire.
  - Wear a face mask fitter or brace.
  - Knot the ear loops and fold or tuck extra material.

For New Yorkers at greater risk, the guidance recommends two masks or even considering higher-grade masks, such as a KN95 mask, which is similar in design and function to N95 masks used by healthcare workers. This includes those who are:

- 65 or older,
- have an underlying medical condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19,
- people who care for someone who is sick,
- people who are in prolonged close contact with non-household members while indoors (such as people who regularly work in-person with the members of the public).

N95 respirators should be used in health care settings.

More information is available on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) website](#).

People should also wear face coverings at home if:

- They live with others who are sick, recently tested positive for COVID-19, or were recently exposed to someone with COVID-19 (unless alone in a separate room). In these instances, face coverings should also be worn around pets.
- If someone who does not live in the household is in the home, face coverings should be worn.

###

**#007-21**

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Patrick Gallahue / Michael Lanza  
[PressOffice@health.nyc.gov](mailto:PressOffice@health.nyc.gov)