

NEWS BRIEF

Signs You May Need to Replace Your Cloth Face Mask

Wearing a cloth face mask or covering when you're out in public is essential for preventing the spread of COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

While many Americans are following CDC, state and local guidance for wearing cloth face masks when they're out in public, some may be wondering whether the masks they wear are still as effective. In addition, many may be forgetting to wash their mask after each use.

Knowing When It's Time to Replace Your Cloth Face Mask or Covering

According to Christopher Sulmonte, the project administrator for the Biocontainment Unit at John Hopkins Medical, there's not an exact timeline for how long you can use a cloth face mask before it needs to be replaced. The original quality of the mask and the harshness of your washing machine play large roles in how quickly your mask may deteriorate.

To see if your mask needs to be replaced, you can:

- Hold your mask up to a light to check for visible fading or spots that you can see through.
- Inspect your mask for any holes.
- Check the fit of your mask to make sure it still fits snugly over your nose and mouth.

If your mask has visible fading, holes or see-through spots, or fits loosely, it's time to replace your mask.

In addition, if you live in an area with colder weather, you can go outside with your mask on to see how far your breath travels through your mask. If your breath

travels more than an inch through your mask, it's time to replace your mask.

Tips for Cleaning Your Cloth Face Mask or Covering

According to the CDC, you should wash your cloth face mask or covering after each wear. As such, it's recommended that you have more than one mask to have a safe mask to wear each day.

The CDC explains there are two methods for washing your masks:

- **Using a washing machine**—You can include your mask(s) with your regular laundry and detergent.
- **Washing by hand**—You can wash your mask(s) by hand, too. To do so, put your mask(s) in a bowl or bin. Use tap water, and detergent or soap to wash the mask, rinsing thoroughly to remove detergent or soap.

The CDC also states that you can use your dryer or air dry your mask(s). However, be sure to check the fabric tags of your mask(s) before using the dryer. In some cases, to preserve the fit and fabric of your masks, you may need to air dry them.

What's Next?

Remember, wearing a mask can help you protect yourself and prevent the spread of COVID-19 during the pandemic.



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