

Frequently Asked Questions

Are homemade masks really effective?

Cloth masks are never meant to be used as substitutes for medical-grade PPE. These masks will be going to Marshall Hospital and will be used as a stop-gap during this extreme mask shortage.

What pattern should I use for hospital staff?

Patterns: While there are many good patterns out there, we are requesting use of the Gray Mask or the Red Poppy Mask as both are Marshall approved patterns and they both allow for a filter to be inserted and changed out frequently. Masks are easily washed and sanitized for reuse with new filters.

What Fabrics are best for making masks?

Recommended Fabrics: 100% Cotton Woven (quilter's cotton/fat quarters, bed sheets, broadcloth, flannel)

Guidelines

- Pellon Light or Medium-weight sew-in interfacing can be added to improve sturdiness and filtration. (Do not use fusible interfacing, which will break down during sterilization)
- The tighter the weave and higher the thread-count, the better the filtration. Hold fabric up to the light to see how much light penetrates, double up if needed.
- Comfort and breathability are also top priority. Stiff fabrics like canvas or duck might injure skin across 12-hour nursing shifts. Impermeable/synthetic fabrics might accumulate moisture and decrease airflow.
- Always pre-shrink cotton fabrics by washing hot and machine drying if possible.
- Cotton blends are also acceptable as long as they can be washed with hot water. Boiling the fabric is a good test!
- Used fabrics are OK so long as they are freshly laundered and have no odor.
- Two distinct colors on top/bottom layer allow the wearer to easily know what side is inside/outside when taking off, putting on.
- Do not use materials that can easily melt or fray.
- We are not recommending that you try and source N95-grade material

How should the masks be fastened?

Mask Fasteners: Tried and tested notions for attachments (i.e. the thing that secures the mask to the face).

- Handmade fabric binding (quilt binding)
- Bias tape: 1/2" pre-packaged. Bias tape makers are available upon request.
- Cotton twill tape (may need pre-shrinking)
- Shoelace or athletic lacing
- Strips of cotton jersey/t-shirt fabric (no hemming required), will not fray and very comfortable.

- *1/4" or 1/8" soft elastic
- *Elastic hair ties

***Notes:** We have received feedback from facilities that elastic, while more convenient than ties, can injure the skin on the back of the ears when worn for long nursing shifts.

Is it important to be able to pinch the nose tightly?

Yes. Having the nose pinched will keep glasses from fogging up and increase comfort.

Nose/Cheek Wire Nose/cheek wire help shape the top edge of the fabric to fit the wearer's face and prevent unfiltered air from entering the mask from the gaps around the nose. If your pattern creates a nose wire pocket, here are some materials that our community has found useful.

Types of wire to be used

- **1000 pieces of fabricated metal strips have been donated by the California Sheet Metal Workers Union and are available at Mattywags and High Sierra Quilters for distribution.**
- 20/2 Doorbell Wire- found in packaged and spools at home improvement stores. Each spool contains 2 wires coated in white and red plastic, but only one is used for sewing in, or placed into a wire pocket. End of wires are rounded off so they do not poke the wearer or through the fabric.
- Copper or stainless steel wire- 20-26 gauge. Round off the ends
- Pipe cleaner- Not recommended. They do not stand up to washing over time, so only appropriate if used in nose/cheek wire pockets

What about filters?

The mask patterns we are asking you to use have a pocket for changeable filters. The recipients of the masks we make will be instructed to use two coffee filters in the pocket of the mask. These are readily available and inexpensive for the recipient to have on hand.

Tips for working safely:

- Follow the golden rule: wash your hands often & don't touch your face!
- Wear one of your own masks while you sew, and gloves if you can
- If you feel sick, stop work! Take care of yourself, and keep any made masks with you at home.
- Take breaks, hydrate, nap, get sunshine. The world needs you healthy, don't try to save it alone!

