

Recommendations for all FIGU members:

The following explanations by Christina Spirk should – according to the advice by Ptaah (10/05/2020) – be considered while wearing protective masks

Face Masks: Tips for the Right Usage and Cleaning

For face masks to function well it is important to wear and clean them correctly.

By Christina Spirk, 25th of April 2020.

Updated: 25th of April at 22:31

Using masks correctly is not always easy: Wearing the prescribed masks is one aspect. But it is equally important to use and clean the face masks correctly. Here are the most common application mistakes and tips on how to avoid them.

For a short time now, wearing masks while shopping and on public transport has been an obligation also in Germany.

Thereby most persons resort to the so-called 'everyday masks'. These include the classic Mouth-Nose-Protector (MNP) or self-sewn masks made of cotton. Both serve mainly the protection of the surroundings, but not the wearer. By covering the mouth, larger droplets are prevented from escaping while coughing or sneezing and while speaking. However, only if one uses the masks correctly.

The following is a summary of the most important points concerning the correct handling of face masks:

1. Donning the Mask

The correct donning of the mask is the first important step for the protective effect of the face mask. Thereby it is important to have clean hands and to touch the mask only on the provided straps. The mask should be inspected for possible damage, holes or other leaks while putting it on. The mask must fit as snugly as possible, although it is important to note that different sizes are available depending on the model. How exactly the mask sits correctly is summarised in point two.

An important tip for persons who wear glasses and for the summer: If you wear glasses or sunglasses together with your mask, the following principle applies: First put on the mask, then the glasses. The glasses should sit over the mask, not under it.

2. The Wearing of the Mask

A mouth-nose-protection is only sensible if it is worn such that it also protects the mouth and nose. Wearing masks in everyday life is new and unusual in this country. Especially during the first use of the mask, one often has the feeling that one can hardly breathe and is tempted to wear the mask loosely. In addition to that, especially poor-quality disposable masks can irritate the skin and cause itching.

Nevertheless, the mouth-nose-protection mask should ideally extend from the bridge of the nose to below the chin – in other words, as the name suggests, it should cover both the nose and the mouth completely. Wearing the mask only over the mouth and leaving the nose free in order to breathe better makes little sense. Similarly, the mask should not just sit on the tip of the nose, but should be as close to the face as possible. A correctly applied mask also seals tightly under the chin.



The nose must also be covered when a face mask is worn correctly. Photo: istock

It is also important not to touch the mask while wearing it. Plucking or pulling the mask is not recommended. Likewise it is not advisable to scratch oneself under the mask or to don and doff it several times during one use.



If the mask does not seal under the chin, it is not properly fitted. Photo: istock

For men, it should also be considered that long beards in particular reduce the protective function of masks, as they can prevent the mask from sealing completely. A diagram, which was created in 2017, for professions that work with protective masks summarises the types of beards that are not recommended.

3. Duration of the Time for Wearing the Mask

The following applies to both disposable masks and fabric masks: As soon as they become damp from the exhaled air, they lose their effect and should be replaced. For longer stays indoors it is therefore advisable to have more than one mask at hand. When staying in highly contaminated environments, such as having direct contact with a sick person, it is advisable to replace the masks immediately afterwards with a new one.

4. The Doffing of the Mask

When taking off the face mask, it is important to touch it only on the provided straps and not the fabric of the mask. Disposable masks should be disposed of directly and not be stored temporarily on various shelves in the home. Reusable masks can be cleaned immediately after use. What needs to be taken into account in that case is summarised in point 5. After doffing or disposing of the mask the hands must be washed. (Advice: with **soap**)

5. Cleaning the Mask

While disposable masks only guarantee a function for single use, purchased or self-sewn fabric masks can be washed and reused. Frequent washing of the masks is advisable. Sometimes there are recommendations for washing the mask after each use.

The washing of conventional fabric masks can be done in the washing machine. In this case the general recommendation for a program for hot wash is at least 60°C. However, since laboratory studies have shown that the novel CCP virus (Wuhan pneumonia) is not completely inactivated within one hour at 60°C, washing programs at 90°C or boiling the mask in a pot are also recommended.

Caution should be exercised with 'eco' programs or 'saving' programmes. These often wash at much lower temperatures and often only guarantee "as clean as at 60 degrees". Detergents containing bleach generally inactivate microorganisms better than colour detergents or mild detergents.

6. Drying the Mask

It is best to dry the masks at the highest possible temperature for the respective fabric if you have a dryer. Another possibility is to iron the masks at the highest level (at least 165°C). It is also possible to blow-dry the masks at the highest setting for longer periods of time. There is also the recommendation to dry protective masks – especially those made of cellulose fabrics and without synthetic materials – in the oven. This should be done at 70 to 90 degrees [Celsius] for at least 20 to 30 minutes.

It is important to always check the masks for damage after washing and drying. If in doubt, they should be disposed of.

7. Choosing a Mask

Of course, not all masks are the same and there are differences in quality. Especially masks that were delivered from China to Europe have, in recent weeks, repeatedly shown demonstrable defects, which reduced or completely cancelled the protective effect.

If masks are purchased on the internet, it is advisable to find out about the manufacturer and their quality standards. Three layers of cotton material are recommended for homemade masks.

An additional tip: If masks are mandatory, it pays to have a replacement mask with you in case a mask tears or is otherwise damaged.

Quelle/ Source:

<https://www.epochtimes.de/gesundheit/ratgeber/gesichtsmasken-tipps-fuer-richtige-anwendung-und-reinigung-a3222682.html>

Translation: Vibka Wallder; corrections: Vivienne Legg and Christian Frehner.