

Does wearing a mask pose any health risks?

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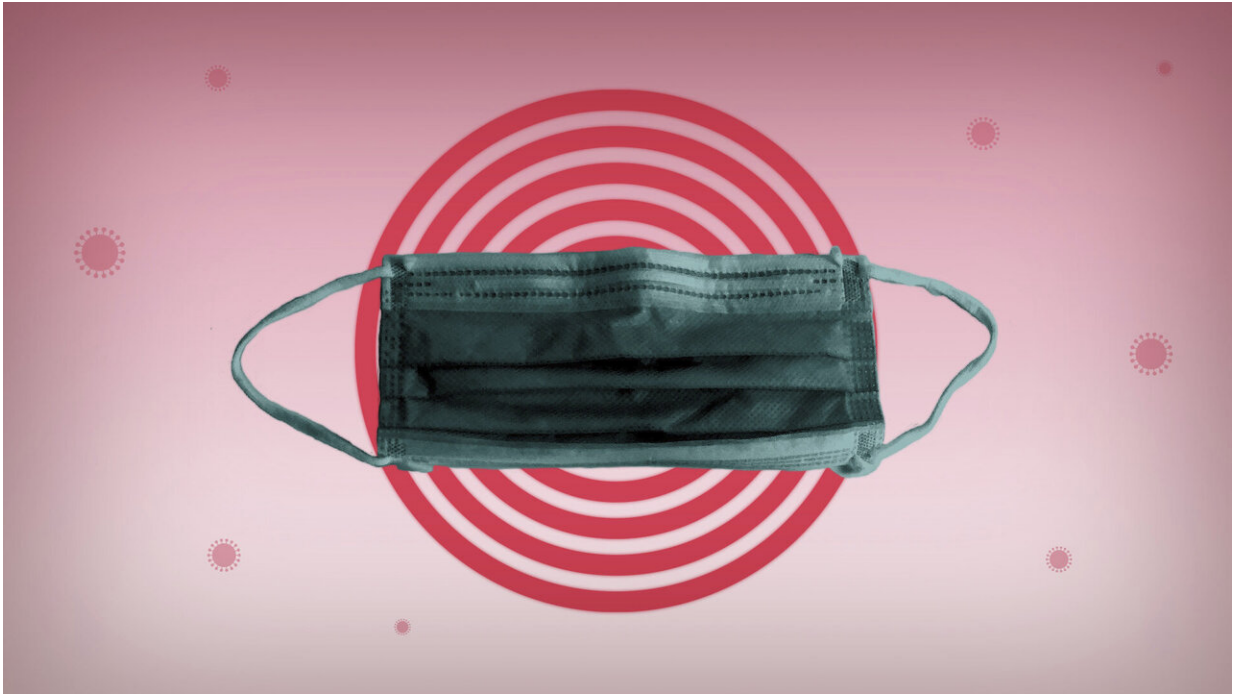


Illustration by Peter Hamlin

Does wearing a mask pose any health risks?

No, not for most people. Babies and toddlers should not wear masks because they could suffocate. The same goes for anyone who has trouble removing a mask without help.

Others can wear masks without risking their health, according to experts,

despite [false rumors](#) to the contrary.

In areas where COVID-19 is spreading, health experts agree that wearing masks or other face coverings in public helps reduce the risk of spreading the virus when people can't socially distance by staying 6 feet apart.

The coronavirus mainly spreads through droplets that are emitted when people talk, laugh, sing, cough and sneeze. Masks lower the likelihood of those droplets reaching other people. Even if you don't have symptoms, you could be carrying the virus and could spread it.

When it's humid outside, it could feel like it's harder to breathe if you're not used to wearing a mask, said Benjamin Neuman, a professor of biology at Texas A&M University-Texarkana. But he said masks don't meaningfully decrease oxygen in the body.

"The body is quite good at adjusting to keep [oxygen levels](#) where they need to be," he said.

There's also no evidence that the use of masks causes fungal or bacterial infections, according to Davidson Hamer, an infectious disease [expert](#) at Boston University. Disposable face masks are meant to be used once, then thrown in the garbage. With cloth [masks](#), it's a good idea to wash them regularly.

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