

Do masks with antiviral coating offer more protection?

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AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

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It's an intriguing idea, but there haven't been enough rigorous independent studies to establish whether antiviral masks are better at protecting wearers or preventing the spread of the virus.

Their specifics vary, but many antiviral masks are supposed to be made or coated with materials that have extra virus-fighting properties, such as copper.

Websites for several antiviral masks do not provide detailed information about how researchers tested their safety or effectiveness, said Hyo-Jick Choi, a materials science expert at the University of Alberta.

But it usually takes years to design and test new mask technology, said Choi, who is part of a group that has been developing a different type of antiviral mask since before the pandemic.

Masks marketed as being "antiviral" often cost more than N-95 and [surgical masks](#). A single coated mask can cost up to \$10; disposable surgical masks and N-95 masks sell at large retailers for between 35 cents and \$3 per mask.

Choi said a simpler way to boost the effectiveness of the [masks](#) you're already using is to ensure you're putting them on, wearing them and taking them off correctly.

And no mask can fully protect wearers, "but almost any mask can help to protect others around the wearers," said Jiaying Huang, a professor of materials science and engineering at Northwestern University.

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