

PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

COVID-19: Who Needs a Facemask and Why?

Samantha Seiler, DO

Ronald Januchowski, DO, FACOFP, Editor • Paula Gregory, DO, MBA, CHCQM, FAHQ, Health Literacy Editor

COVID-19 is a virus spread by respiratory droplets that come out when coughing, sneezing and talking. Wearing a facemask may reduce disease spread by limiting the number of respiratory droplets deposited on people and surfaces.

WHO AND WHY?

Surgical/medical masks should be saved for those who have a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection. Anyone with likely exposure, such as people in the health care field and people caring for loved ones at home with a suspected or confirmed infection, should wear a surgical/medical mask.

A surgical or medical mask should also be worn by individuals in public when social distancing is not possible such as those who are 60 and older, those with diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and lung disease, or are immunosuppressed.

Cloth masks should be worn by anyone where maintaining a distance of greater than six feet is difficult. This includes most commercial businesses, grocery stores and public transportation.

Children under the age of two should not wear a mask of any type.

Wearing a mask is one method to possibly prevent the spread of COVID-19, but it does not replace social distancing and handwashing. Wearing a mask should always be done while also physically distancing a minimum of six feet and washing your hands often.

HOW TO PUT ON AND TAKE OFF

- Wash your hands.
- Secure the mask over your mouth and nose.
- Refrain from touching your mask. Wash your hands if you touch it.
- To remove, only touch loops or ties. Do not touch your mouth, nose or eyes.
- Wash your hands immediately after removal.

DOWNLOAD AND DISTRIBUTE

The PDF of this patient education handout is available for easy download and distribution to your patients at www.acofp.org/PEH.