

Help Patients Tolerate Masks in Light of COVID-19

Patients will ask you how to handle problems with masks.

Recommend finding a face covering that's comfortable.

Emphasize that masks should COVER the nose, mouth, and chin...fit somewhat snugly...and have 2 or more layers of fabric.

Anxiety or claustrophobia. Suggest slow, calming breaths...and wearing the mask for short periods at home to get used to it.

Advise trying a 100% cotton mask if heat buildup is an issue.

If patients are concerned that they won't get enough oxygen, check a pulse oximetry in the office while they're wearing a mask.

Encourage "mask breaks" when it's safe to remove them...in the car with household members, outside if 6 feet away from others, etc.

Fogged glasses. Suggest wearing a mask with a nose bridge or moldable material at the top...resting glasses over the mask...or using medical tape to adhere the mask to the nose and cheekbones.

Or consider washing lenses with soapy water, shaving cream, or antifog products. These leave a thin film that can reduce fogging. But caution these may remove lenses' protective coatings over time.

Headache. Clarify this is NOT from buildup of carbon dioxide.

It may be from pressure due to ear loops or poor mask fit...dehydration...or possibly odors, such as fragrances or bad breath.

Suggest trying a mask with ties...or using paperclips or other ways to connect ear loops behind the head instead of the ears.

Recommend setting reminders (phone alarms, etc) for water breaks...and encourage plenty of fluids when masks aren't needed.

Eating or drinking. Discourage masks with straw holes, exhale valves, or other openings...these defeat the purpose.

Educate NOT to pull masks under the chin or hang from an ear...the front could be contaminated.

Advise removing masks by ear loops or ties...and putting in a clean paper bag or laying outer side down on a napkin. Recommend handwashing or sanitizing when donning, adjusting, or removing the mask.

Remind patients to replace with a clean mask once damp or soiled...and to launder cloth masks daily with fragrance-free detergent.

Get our chart, *FAQs: Non-Medical Masks and Face Coverings*, for advice on face shields and possible mask exemptions. Also see our chart, *PPE-Related Skin Irritation*, to help manage mask-related skin issues.

Key References:

- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html (8-24-20)
- www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html (8-24-20)
- <https://adaa.org/sites/default/files/Tips%20for%20Getting%20Comfortable%20in%20Your%20Mask%20and%20with%20>

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PPE_UChicago%20Medicine%2C%20NYU%2C%20Emory%20.pdf (8-24-20)

-www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/face-mask-foggy-glasses-coronavirus-covid (8-24-20)

-www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks (8-24-20)

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