Wearing Masks:
Help Stop the Spread of Germs

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants to help visitors stop the spread of germs through mask use.   Knowing how to use a mask and when to wear one can help keep you and our Veteran patients and residents safer from colds and flu!

Face Masks

Many types of masks are used for health and safety reasons. VA uses face masks to help stop flu and cold germs and they will be the focus here. Face masks can have:

• Elastic string that wraps behind your ears.
• Strings that tie around your head.
• Pleats with round edges.
• Pleats with squared edges.

How Do Masks Work?

When a person sneezes, coughs, breathes, or laughs, germs can spread into the air on droplets. A face mask can reduce the number of germs released into the air. Wearing a mask can help you stop these droplets from spreading to

• Veteran patients and residents;
• VA staff;
• Others near you.

When should I wear a mask?

• When coughing or sneezing
• When you have a cold or flu
• When those near you are coughing, sneezing, or have a cold or flu
• When caring for someone who is sick
• When visiting/entering the room of a patient or resident who has
  a cold or flu

What I need to know before using a mask?

• Only use it once.
• Do not share one.
• Do not try to clean and reuse one.
• Using masks will not stop the spread of all germs. Here are more ways to
  help stop the spread of germs.
  - Keep hands clean (wash with soap and water or use an alcohol hand rub).
  - Cover coughs and sneezes.
  - Stay home when sick. Don't visit patients or residents. Instead, phone
    them or use video chat.

Please don't visit our patients and residents if you are sick, coughing, or sneezing. Instead, phone them or use video chat.

If coughing or sneezing - wear a mask to help protect our patients and residents and staff who serve them!

Where can I find a mask?

No need to visit a drug or grocery store to find a mask. When you visit a patient or resident, you can find them:

- On stands in halls, waiting rooms, elevator areas, and entryways;
- On carts outside a patient's or resident's room;
- In holders on the wall or door;
- By asking staff for one.

How do I put on a mask?

1. Clean your hands first.
2. Place the stiff upper edge of the mask on your nose.
3. Make sure it covers your nose, mouth, and chin.
4. Make sure the edges touch your face and chin.
5. Pull/tie the strings around your ears/head.
6. Press the stiff upper edge to the shape of your nose.
7. Ask staff if you need help.

How do I take off my mask?

Change your mask when it becomes damaged, dirty, or too moist. Only use a mask once. To take off your mask:

1. Touch only the strings;
2. Untie/unwrap the strings;
3. Discard the mask into the nearest trash can;
4. Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol hand rub.

Why do VA staff wear masks?

Staff (employee, volunteers, and trainees) wear masks for many reasons. One important reason is to help stop the spread of flu or cold germs to protect patients, residents, and others near them.

Learn more

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration - *https://www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices/ ProductsandMedicalProcedures/GeneralHospitalDevicesandSupplies/Person- alProtectiveEquipment/ucm055977.htm*
- San Francisco Department of Public Health - *https://www.sfcdcp.org/com- municable-disease/healthy-habits/how-to-put-on-and-remove-a-face-mask/*
- VHA video - *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6veImR2RKQ*

www.prevention.va.gov/InfectionDontPassItOn -

Infection
Don't Pass It On

VA

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