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Guidelines

Guidelines for Mandatory use of Face Mask

Objective

To provide guidelines to the public for wearing a face mask during the current pandemic of COVID-19.

Rationale

A regular disposable face mask (also called a surgical face mask or a medical face mask) is considered as one of the 'Personal Protective Equipment's (PPEs)' of a health care worker. It is also used in the healthcare settings to cover the face of a patient, from whom spread of a communicable infection is a possibility.

As regards COVID-19, there is now evidence to believe that a person infected with COVID-19 virus, may appear well for a variable period before falling ill, or may never exhibit any symptoms and yet is shedding virus during sneezing, coughing and while speaking, so it may be difficult for someone to know with certitude if he or she is carrying COVID-19 virus and releasing these in the atmosphere. Studies of influenza, influenza-like illness, and human coronaviruses provide evidence that the use of a face mask can reduce the spread of droplets from an infected person to others. It is prudent, under the circumstances of the current pandemic, for the people to wear face masks with an intention to protect their fellow beings from droplets of their saliva/sputum, particularly when entering closed or congested areas and also for their own safety. Many countries have already adopted this as a national guideline.

General Instructions

- It is pertinent to remember that use of a face mask is not a substitute for maintaining social distancing and performing hand hygiene

- In a health care setting, all the health care workers shall follow the guidelines for wearing PPE. Patients shall follow the advice of their doctors

- **Facemasks are mandatory to be worn by everyone whenever leaving their homes at all times including when at crowded public places, mosques, bazaars, shopping malls, public transport i.e. roads, rails and flights**

- All COVID-19 positive and suspected individuals must wear disposable facemasks to ensure that others around them are protected from droplets generated by the positive person while breathing, talking, coughing or sneezing

- All individuals should continue to wear a face mask while talking to reduce possible spread of infection

- Adults who are 60 years and above, especially those with pre-existing medical conditions, such as hypertension, heart and lung disease, diabetes or cancer are more likely to have severe coronavirus infection than other age groups should be encouraged to stay at home and must wear face mask when going out for an essential purpose

- Once the mask is worn, it is considered as a part of the face and therefore must not be touched with hands throughout its use. If touched or handled after wearing, then hand hygiene must be performed

- The mask should be replaced with a new one when it gets soiled or becomes moist.

- The soiled disposable mask shall be disposed off properly and the reusable one shall be placed in a sealable polythene bag and placed in a dedicated pocket of the dress or in a dedicated pocket of a washable handbag.

- The pocket of the dress or the bag, in which a soiled mask was saved, shall not be used or handled for any other purpose before washing.

- N95 mask is only needed in high risk healthcare facilities by the health workers and is beneficial only when worn according to the instructions, and after passing a 'fit test'.

Use of Face Masks at Home

Persons with suspected COVID-19 or mild symptoms should:

- Wear a face mask all the times except during eating & drinking or while washing the face, shaving or taking a bath, the mask should be changed when it gets soiled or moist
- Persons who cannot tolerate a face mask should rigorously observe respiratory hygiene. Coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow and subsequently performing 'hand hygiene only' is not a complete recommendation. (Refer to guidelines for respiratory hygiene)

Caregivers or those sharing a living space with persons suspected of COVID-19:

- Must wear a face mask and observe social distancing

Use of Face mask in a health care setting

Symptomatic people visiting a health care setting should:
- Wear a face mask throughout their stay in the facility, except when instructed otherwise by healthcare personnel

How to wear and remove Face mask

- Place the mask over the mouth and nose and secure it carefully to minimize the space between the face and the mask
- Remove the mask without touching its part covering the face. Do not allow it to touch your clothes either
- Perform hand hygiene after removing the mask

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr. Saira Kanwal, Irfan Mirza, and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.

References:

1. Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19, CDC, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html
2. Rational use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by WHO
3. Interim recommendations for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) during hospital care of people with Coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

For more information, please contact:

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad
http://covid.gov.pk/

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http://nhsrc.gov.pk/	https://www.facebook.com/NHSRCOfficial
http://www.hsa.edu.pk/	https://twitter.com/nhsrcofficial
https://www.nih.org.pk/	https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdYuzeSP4Ug1f__ZZKI

ANNEXURE: MAKING OF CLOTH FACE MASKS (CDC)

## SEWN CLOTH FACE COVERING

Materials

- Two 10"x6" rectangles of cotton fabric
- Two 6" pieces of elastic (or rubber bands, string, cloth strips, or hair ties)
- Needle and thread (or bobby pin)
- Scissors
- Sewing machine

Tutorial
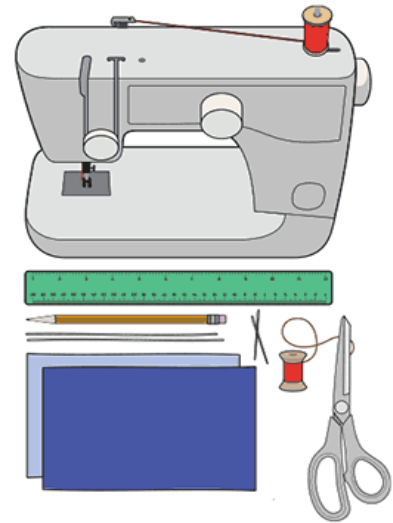
1. Cut out two 10-by-6-inch rectangles of cotton fabric. Use tightly woven cotton, such as quilting fabric or cotton sheets. T-shirt fabric will work in a pinch. Stack the two rectangles; you will sew the mask as if it was a single piece of fabric.
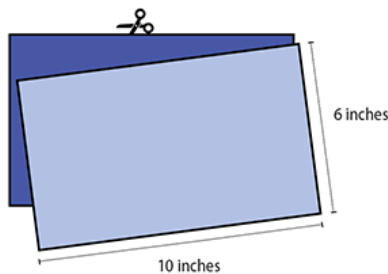
2. Fold over the long sides ¼ inch and hem. Then fold the double layer of fabric over ½ inch along the short sides and stitch down.
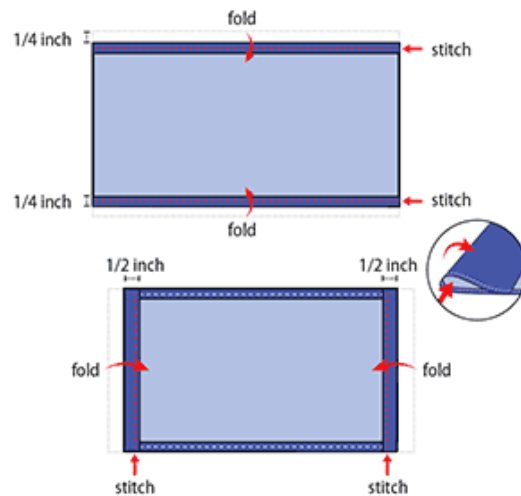
3. Run a 6-inch length of 1/8-inch wide elastic through the wider hem on each side of the mask. These will be the ear loops. Use a large needle or a bobby pin to thread it through. Tie the ends tight.
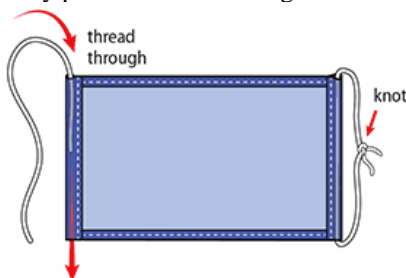
4. Gently pull on the elastic so that the knots are tucked inside the hem. Gather the sides of the mask on the elastic and adjust so the mask fits your face. Then securely stitch the elastic in place to keep it from slipping.
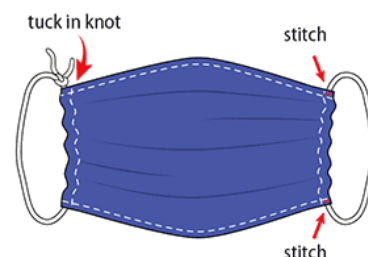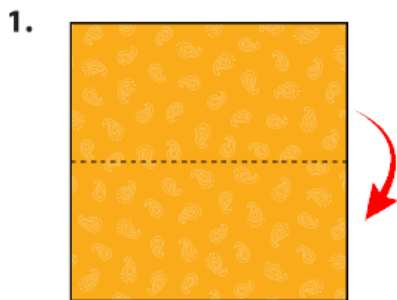
BANDANA FACE COVERING (NO SEW METHOD)
Materials

- Bandana (or square cotton cloth approximately 20"x20")
- Rubber bands (or hair ties)
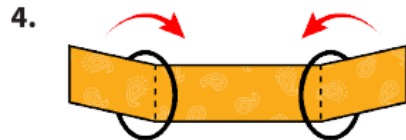- Scissors (if you are cutting your own cloth)

Tutorial

1.

Fold bandana in half.

2.

Fold top down. Fold bottom up.

3.

Place rubber bands or hair ties about 6 inches apart.

4.

Fold side to the middle and tuck.

5.

6.