

Face Masks for Midwives in the Time of COVID-19



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COVID-19 Context for Midwives

- CDC estimate: 25% of people infected don't present any symptoms
- 2 NYC hospitals: 14% of patients admitted in labor who tested positive showed no symptoms
- Infectious droplets can linger in the air for hours
- With varying likelihood, providers and patients may be infectious
- Severe, widespread shortage of PPE

Evolving Guidance for Face Masks

- CDC in late March: No reason for healthy people to wear face masks
- CDC in April: Everyone should wear a mask in public
- ACOG recommends N-95, or face mask, for all patient contact; patients wear masks when with providers
- My local hospital:
 - ~ March: no masks for providers on L&D
 - ~ April: Everyone in hospital wearing masks at all times; face shields for all patient contact; N-95 for labor



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Historic Evidence Being Re-Examined

- CDC: Any cloth face mask protects others from the wearer
- Recent research suggests cloth masks can be constructed to perform better to protect the wearer
- Risk mitigation is the point
- Homemade masks are not tested in lab environments and rigorous specifications regarding safety conveyed are not available



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Recent Face Mask Research/Info

- Dr. Yang Wang, Missouri University of Science and Technology: testing cotton face masks with filters
- Dr. Scott Siegel, chairman of anesthesiology at Wake Forest Baptist Health studied mask materials and filters
- Today: NY Times: Which Mask Should You Wear?
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/health/coronavirus-best-face-masks.html>



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Types of Masks & Comparative Effectiveness

2013: *Testing the Efficacy of Homemade Masks: Would They Protect in an Influenza Pandemic* (published in Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness)

Material	<i>B atrophaeus</i>		Bacteriophage MS2		Pressure Drop Across Fabric	
	Mean % Filtration Efficiency	SD	Mean % Filtration Efficiency	SD	Mean	SD
100% cotton T-shirt	69.42 (70.66)	10.53 (6.83)	50.85	16.81	4.29 (5.13)	0.07 (0.57)
Scarf	62.30	4.44	48.87	19.77	4.36	0.19
Tea towel	83.24 (96.71)	7.81 (8.73)	72.46	22.60	7.23 (12.10)	0.96 (0.17)
Pillowcase	61.28 (62.38)	4.91 (8.73)	57.13	10.55	3.88 (5.50)	0.03 (0.26)
Antimicrobial Pillowcase	65.62	7.64	68.90	7.44	6.11	0.35
Surgical mask	96.35	0.68	89.52	2.65	5.23	0.15
Vacuum cleaner bag	94.35	0.74	85.95	1.55	10.18	0.32
Cotton mix	74.60	11.17	70.24	0.08	6.18	0.48
Linen	60.00	11.18	61.67	2.41	4.50	0.19
Silk	58.00	2.75	54.32	29.49	4.57	0.31

^a Numbers in parentheses refer to the results from 2 layers of fabric.

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How to Wear a Mask

DO wear the mask as shown

DON'T wear the mask

- Just below the nose
- Chin exposed
- Loose gaps on the sides
- On the tip of the nose
- Under the chin



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Safety Tips for Masks

- Always wash your hands before and after wearing a mask
- Use the ties or loops to put your mask on and pull it off
- Don't touch the front of the mask when you take it off
- For apartment dwellers, put the mask on and remove it while *inside your home*. Elevators and stairwells can be high-contamination areas
- Wash and dry your cloth mask daily and keep it in a clean, dry place
- Don't have a false sense of security



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Considerations for Community Midwives

- Ask clients to wear any homemade face mask during in-person encounters to protect the midwife and themselves
- Midwives wear face masks consisting of two layers of cotton with HEPA vacuum bag filter inserted between the two layers during contact with clients
- Combine use of face masks with rigorous safety and risk mitigation practice protocols
- We love you and need you, we are relying on you – be safe!



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