Face Covering FAQs

U-M requires all students, staff, faculty, and visitors to wear a face covering that covers the mouth and nose when indoors on U-M property (including the Ann Arbor, Dearborn and Flint campuses as well as U-M controlled properties off campus) and when on U-M buses per the U-M face covering policy. Guidance on the best type and fit of masks continues to evolve. The university recommends well-fitting masks with better filtration such as disposable masks, KN95s and N95s. The frequently asked questions below provide additional guidance on face coverings.

What factors should I consider when selecting a face covering?

The most important factor to consider when selecting a face covering is fit. A face covering should completely cover your nose and mouth, be secure under your chin and fit snugly against the sides of your face. It should be comfortable, easy to wear, and breathable. Another important factor is type of material. Non-woven (disposable mask, KN95, and N95) face coverings offer better source control and filtration than cloth face coverings.

With the new variants of SARS-CoV-2 in circulation, should I get a better mask?

Correct and consistent mask use is a critical step everyone can take to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19. The CDC recommends that everyone should wear a well-fitting mask. Masks work best when everyone wears them, but not all masks provide the same protection. When choosing a mask, look at how well it fits, how well it filters the air, and how many layers it has.

How can I obtain a disposable mask, KN95 or N95?

COVID-19 mask supplies can be found at U-M Procurement or M-Marketsite. Contact your supervisor or unit leadership for additional information on ordering. Alternatively, employees and students are able to provide their own. Individuals can also get masks at all Community Sampling and Tracking Program (CSTP) testing locations while supplies last.

Can I reuse my disposable mask, KN95 or N95?

Yes with proper care these face coverings should be reusable for an extended period of time.

Remove your mask correctly and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching a used mask. Keep it in a dry, breathable bag (like a paper or mesh fabric bag) to keep it clean between uses.

If you are taking off your mask to eat or drink outside of your home, you can place it somewhere safe to keep it clean, such as your pocket, purse, or paper bag. Make sure to wash or sanitize your hands after removing your mask. After eating, put the mask back on.

Do not attempt to wash your disposable mask, KN95 or N95.

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When should I discard my disposable mask, KN95, or N95?

You should replace your disposable mask, KN95 or N95 when it becomes soiled, no longer covers the nose and mouth, has stretched out or damaged ties or straps, or has holes or tears in the fabric.

Can I use an N95 respirator as a face covering?

Yes, when N95s are used as a face covering and not as a respirator, they are not subject to the MIOSHA requirements such as fit testing, medical surveillance and training.

What about other masks?

A great variety of other masks are being advertised, but many are untested, non-standard and poor quality. We do not recommend their purchase or use.

Can I wear a face shield or mask with an exhalation valve?

The use of a face shield as a substitute for a face covering is not allowed nor is the use of any face covering with an exhalation valve.