Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority

Radio Script: Face masks

Updated: April 2021

Hello listeners! This is _____.

Today, we are going to talk about face masks.

Face masks are another tool we can use to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Face masks can limit the spread of droplets when people cough, sneeze, laugh, or speak. They do this by acting as a barrier to stop the movement of droplets to and from people. Face masks should fit snugly over the mouth, nose, and chin. There should be no gaps around the edges. When they fit correctly, masks can protect other people from our droplets by containing them. Masks can also protect us from the droplets of others by blocking them from our nose and mouth.

There are three different kinds of face masks.

The first kind is N95 masks. They are also called professional medical grade masks. These masks are worn by healthcare workers.

The second kind is medical or surgical masks. These are single use masks. They can be worn by many people. But often they are worn by healthcare workers and anyone who is sick or who has symptoms of COVID-19.

The third kind is cloth masks. These are multi-use masks. There are many different designs out there. The main thing we need to remember is that cloth masks should now have 3 layers. Two of the layers should be made out of a tightly woven material like linen or cotton. It is suggested that the middle layer be made of polypropylene. This is a non-woven material that acts like a filter.

If you can find and use cloth masks with these three layers that is amazing. But if not, try and make sure your mask has three layers. If you already have a two-layer mask, you could sew on another layer. You could also add a filter to your mask if it has a pocket for it.

The reason for these new recommendations is that we keep learning more about how COVID-19 spreads. And in doing so, we are learning ways we can improve our defenses.

Other kinds of face coverings like bandanas or neck gaiters are not recommended. This is because they don't fit snugly to our face. When a mask or covering doesn't fit closely to our face, there is a greater risk of droplets moving in and out of these coverings. This in turn increases the risk of infection.

There are many different companies selling face masks online. If you buy online, it is a good idea to read the product information and confirm that it has three-layers.

You can also make your own face mask, using an old shirt, a bandana, or a sheet and some elastic bands. There are teachings available online. You can also contact Approaches to Community Wellbeing for instructions to make a cloth mask. You can call 1-866-337-0081. Or you can send an email to acwinfo@slfnha.com.

We want our face masks to work as best they can. So, let's review how to put on and take off face masks safely.

To put on a face mask there are three steps.

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
2. Take hold of the ties or ear loops on your face masks.
3. Touching only the loops or ties, pull on your mask. Make sure your mask covers your nose, mouth, and chin. Check that the mask fits snugly with no gaps.

Once your face mask is on, do your best not to touch it. If you do need to adjust your mask, wash your hands before and after touching it. And try to only touch the loops and edges. Keep away from the front of the mask.

To take off your face mask, you follow similar steps.

1. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. If you don't have access to soap and water, use hand sanitizer.
2. Take hold of the ties or ear loops of your mask.
3. Touching only the ties or loops, pull off your mask.

If you are wearing a surgical mask, you can put the mask in the garbage and wash your hands. These masks are only used once.

If you are wearing a cloth mask, you can place the mask in a bag or your pocket and wash your hands. When you get home, put your cloth mask in the laundry. Wash your cloth mask in hot water and lay it out flat to dry.

We now wear face masks in many places that we go. We wear masks when we enter public spaces like the Northern Store. We wear masks when we are seeking care at the Nursing Station or caring for someone at home. We wear masks when we are flying out of community or sharing a car ride with others. But it is also a good idea to wear a face mask when you can't practice physical distancing, even if you are outside.

Face masks are a good tool for many people. But they are not for everyone. Infants under the age of 2 should not wear face masks. Anyone who can't put on and take off a mask on their own should not wear a mask. And those who have conditions that make it difficult to breathe should not wear a mask.

Even if we all wore face masks, they alone cannot control the spread of COVID-19. We need to continue to follow the recommendations from our public health leadership. We are safest and strongest when we use all of the safety measures together.

This brings us to the end. If you have more questions about face masks or if you are interested in more resources, you can visit the SLFNHA website. The web address is www.slfnha.com/covid/.

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