



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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March 3, 2021

TO: All Incarcerated Individuals and Work Release Residents
FROM: DOC COVID-19 Medical Team
SUBJECT: Mask Up - Surgical Mask Expectations and Proper Use

As Corrections continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, new information about the virus and how to keep yourself and others safe is continuously updated. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has indicated that not only is the type of mask important, the fit of the mask is also key to protecting yourself and those around you. Here are some expectations for surgical mask wearing, along with some important reminders and tips on how to ensure you are properly wearing your surgical mask.

It is required that:

- Effective March 4, 2021, all incarcerated individuals and work release residents will wear a surgical mask per Secretary Sinclair's memo dated February 25, 2021.
- Masks will be worn properly by covering both the nose and mouth with minimal gaps that allow free flowing air.

Individuals housed in Intensive Management Units will be provided with a surgical mask during movement only. The mask will be discarded upon returning to their cell. Individuals housed in Residential Treatment Units will wear a surgical mask without a nose piece or with nose piece removed by staff, and the individual is required to wear a cloth mask over the surgical mask to improve fit.

What you should know about your surgical mask:

- The surgical masks provided by Corrections have three (3) layers of fabric and provide excellent protection when worn correctly.
- To prevent air from leaking out the top of the mask it is important that you pinch the mask to bend the nose wire to fit closely around your nose.
- Check for gaps around the edges of the mask. If there is a gap on either side, the CDC has recommended the following ideas to help fit your surgical mask more snugly against your face:
 - Knotting the ear loops and tucking the material of your surgical mask can improve the fit. A step-by-step instructional poster will be shared by your facility (DOC 600-PO001).
 - Another option is to wear a well-fitted cloth mask over your surgical mask. While double masking is not required, it can improve the fit of the mask for all day wear.
- Surgical masks will be available for daily replacement or when mask is wet or soiled.
- Surgical masks must be worn when outdoors or during heavy exercise, but should be replaced soon after activity if the mask becomes wet.

"Working Together for SAFER Communities"

When is it permissible to take off my mask?

- Surgical masks must be worn at all times whenever you are outside your cell/room or leave your assigned bunk in an open dorm setting, however can be removed to eat or drink only if you are stationary and at least six (6) feet from any other individual.
- To properly doff (take off) your mask/s carefully.
 - Handle only by the ear loops or ties
 - Fold outside corners together
 - Immediately discard
 - Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing
 - *Remember, anytime you put on, take off, adjust, or touch your mask for any reason, you must immediately wash or sanitize your hands.*

It is important that we continue to socially distance, mask up, maintain hand hygiene, and get vaccinated when available.

Improve How Your Mask Protects You

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) it is important that your mask fits snugly against your face. Gaps can let air with respiratory droplets leak in and out around the edges of the mask.

If you have gaps, try the following method to improve the mask fit.



Knot and Tuck

1. Fold the mask in half horizontally from edge to edge.
2. Tie a knot in the ear loop. Make sure the knot is close to the edge of the mask. Repeat step with both ear loops.
3. Hold the mask to your face and form the nose piece to your nose.
4. Remove mask from face and tuck in the extra fabric located by the knot into the inside of the mask to eliminate gapping. Repeat step with both sides.
5. Place mask on face and ear loops over ears. Pull the bottom of the mask under your chin and form the nose piece to your nose.