

Dear Research Partners,

The Office of Research and the Research, Campus, and Environmental Safety team is providing supplemental resources, awareness, and guidance regarding safe use of face coverings in laboratory areas. We are committed to assisting our research community as you continue to protect your lab members from recognized safety hazards, in concert with supporting the University's efforts to minimize public health risks due to the spread of contagious illness in our community.

In regard to face coverings, the [CDC](#) advises the following:

- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The cloth face cover is not a substitute for social distancing.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- Everyone should wear a [cloth face cover](#) when they have to go out in public. Cloth face coverings should not be worn by anyone who has trouble breathing.
- The cloth face cover is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Do NOT use a facemask meant for a healthcare worker.

TYPES OF FACE COVERINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR LAB USE

Disposable Non-Medical Face Masks	Cloth Face Covering
 <p data-bbox="313 1417 751 1612">Non-medical masks are not considered personal protective equipment. They may have some level of fluid-resistance, and are designed for single use.</p>	 <p data-bbox="808 1423 1235 1577">Cloth face coverings are not considered personal protective equipment. They must be washed daily for reuse.</p>

According to CDC: Face masks/cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting to others. A face covering may not protect the wearer, but it may keep the wearer from spreading the virus to others.

Disposable Non-Medical Face Masks/Coverings:

Considerations for lab use

- Use disposable face coverings in the laboratory work area unless there is a direct safety hazard or chemical incompatibility issue associated with wearing one. Consult with your supervisor/PI if use of your face covering presents safety concerns relative to conducting your job duties.
- A disposable face covering does not replace any other recommended or required personal protective equipment (PPE) for your duties or work space such as goggles, face shields, or respirators, and it should not interfere with the fit or function of PPE.
- Adjust your face covering and ensure it fits properly, so that it does not obstruct your vision. Twist or cross ear-loops to tighten the face covering, if needed.
- Do not touch your face covering with gloved hands. Remove your gloves before taking your face covering off. Face coverings should be removed prior to exiting the lab, to minimize the potential for cross-contamination outside of the laboratory.
- Students and staff who conduct research at the laboratory bench/fume hood/biosafety cabinet with hazardous chemicals, biohazards or radioactive materials must discard the disposable face covering at the end of each work shift. If any hazardous materials contact the face covering, it must be disposed of immediately and replaced with a clean covering.
- Disposable face coverings must only be worn for one day and then must be placed in the trash. Also, discard and replace disposable coverings if they become damaged, soiled, or wet.

Cloth/Reusable Face Coverings:

Please review the CDC guidance for appropriate use and types of cloth face coverings:

[CDC FACE COVERINGS](#)

Considerations for lab use:

- Cloth face coverings are not appropriate in some work environments. They cannot be adequately decontaminated, and therefore should not be worn in environments where the face covering may become contaminated by infectious materials or other hazardous substances. Students and staff may not wear a reusable face covering when conducting research at the laboratory bench/fume hood/biosafety cabinet with hazardous chemicals, biohazards or radioactive materials.
- Do not wear a cloth face covering if it can be entangled in machinery.
- Do not wear a cloth face covering when using open flames or flammable materials.

PROPER CARE AND USE

Putting on a Face Covering



Wash hands with soap and water or apply hand sanitizer before donning a face covering.



Put face covering on with ear loops over ears or ties behind head.



Adjust covering so that it covers your nose and mouth, with no gaps between the covering and your face.



Wash hands with soap and water or apply hand sanitizer after putting on face covering.



Avoid touching the face covering while wearing it.

If reusing your face covering, handle by using straps

Face Covering Removal and Care



Wash hands with soap and water or apply hand sanitizer before taking off a face covering.



Try to only touch straps when removing face covering and placing in bag for disposal or reuse.



Fold flat or cloth face coverings: place in paper bag labeled with your name, with the inner surface contacting bag.



Place other rigid face coverings in labeled paper bag with outer surface contacting bag.



Wash hands with soap and water or apply hand sanitizer.

- You may reuse a face covering only until it becomes torn, until it is visibly soiled or hard to breathe through, or if you have contact with an infectious person.
- Cloth face coverings should be laundered at home using household supplies on a daily basis.
- Do not attempt to clean disposable face coverings – these items should be discarded daily, and if torn or visibly soiled should be replaced promptly with a new face covering.

RESOURCES:

- If supply chain delays are impacting a research group's ability to acquire disposable face coverings for lab members, supervisors/Pis can request a temporary supply of disposable face coverings for use in laboratory areas by contacting Research@utdallas.edu.
- Consider using anti-fogging spray on safety glasses. The Office of Research will provide one bottle of this spray to each research lab.
- Provide clean storage options for reusable face coverings – manila mailing envelopes are a great option, and can be obtained through your normal office supply ordering process.
- Work with your lab group to develop safe operating procedures (SafeOP's) to help guide lab members regarding new practices in the laboratory. The Safety team is available for consultation, and can be contacted at Safety@utdallas.edu.