








Recommended Protective Face Mask Guidance (Revised 2/11/2021)

Given the increased risk for transmission with new variants of COVID-19, **all individuals should double mask with a cloth mask over the top of a surgical mask**. Additional recommendations for individuals at higher risk for exposure or severe illness can be found below. Wear recommended protective face masks at all times when inside university buildings, except when alone in a private office, eating in a campus dining facility or in your own residence hall room. Recommended protective face masks in outdoor spaces are encouraged, especially when social distancing is not possible. All recommended protective face masks should cover the nose, mouth and chin and should be fitted properly. Recommended protective face masks are not a substitute for social distancing, and both strategies should be employed when safely possible.

RECOMMENDED			
	Cloth Mask over a Disposable Surgical Mask		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear a multilayer cloth mask over a high quality surgical mask (Read specific recommendations for each of these mask types in the "Acceptable" section below.)
ACCEPTABLE	Cloth Mask		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face Be secured with ties or ear loops Include multiple layers of fabric (three is ideal, with an absorbent innermost layer made of cotton and a moisture-wicking outer layer made of polyester) A white innermost layer is recommended to detect moisture easily (replace if moisture is identified) Allow for breathing without restriction Can be laundered, and should be washed before reuse
	Disposable Surgical Mask		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knot the ear loops where they attach to the mask's edges and then tuck in and flatten the extra material close to the face Contain droplets but do not make a tight seal on the face Available in different thicknesses with different ability to protect; if worn alone, choose a higher quality mask such as an ASTM level 2 or 3 Intended for one-time use, must be disposed of after use
	N95 or KN95 Respirator Masks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wearing an N95/KN95 may be considered in certain circumstances related to the working/learning environment and inherent health risks of the individual. See below for more information While effective at offering a high level of protection if properly fitted, these types of respirator masks are discouraged as they divert critical resources away from health care workers Need medical clearance for proper fitting
NOT PERMITTED	Neck Gaiter, Bandana, Scarf, T-shirt or Towel		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited ability to contain droplets If worn, layering fabric can provide increased protection Should be washed before reuse
	Mask with Valve		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masks with valves should not be used as it can expel exhaled air into the environment, increasing the risk for others
	Face Shield		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not approved unless worn together with an approved face mask Lack of evidence of efficacy in containing droplets

Individuals at Low Risk

Individuals at low risk include students, staff and faculty who are in good health and have general minimal on-campus activity levels. Activities may include walking around campus or in buildings and sitting in classrooms where social distancing can be maintained except for brief periods of less than one minute. Individuals at low risk should double mask with a cloth mask over the top of a surgical mask.

Individuals at High Risk

Everyone is at risk for getting COVID-19 if they are exposed to the virus; however, some people are more likely than others to become severely ill. For more information about conditions that increase risk for COVID-19, see the [CDC](#).

UT community members at increased risk who engage in low-risk activities such as walking around campus and sitting in classrooms where social distancing can be maintained except for brief periods are encouraged to double mask or wear face masks with increased protective ability, such as a KN95 mask with medical clearance and proper fitting.

Individuals in High Exposure Environments

UT community members in higher risk environments are expected to use face coverings with increased protective ability. In general, cloth face masks are not appropriate substitutes for surgical masks or respirators in workplaces where the latter are recommended and available. See the university's [health behavior guidance](#) for more information.

Special Considerations and Exemptions

UT community members with special considerations may require accommodations. These include medical or psychiatric conditions (e.g. lung disease, severe anxiety) that make it difficult or impossible to safely wear a face mask. There are cases in which faculty may be approved to wear a clear plastic mask if no alternate, satisfactory accommodation is available for students who rely on lip reading. Please refer to the university's [health behavior guidance](#) for more information about special considerations and exemptions.