

The Allergy & Asthma Clinic

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Wearing a Mask if you have Asthma

As we all continue to live with the COVID-19 pandemic, requirements for face coverings continue to expand, some patients with asthma may have questions about wearing masks in public. Here is what we know.

- Face masks help to slow the spread of the virus. Masks can help keep people who may have the virus from transmitting it to others. Cloth face masks are available for purchase in many stores or online. They can also be made at home from common materials at low cost. One benefit of cloth face masks is they can be washed and reused so they are always available. As noted in our previous emails and on our website, masks with a one way valve should not be used, as these types of masks can permit droplets to be released from the mask increasing the possibility of spreading infection.
- Face masks should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- There is no evidence that wearing a face mask makes asthma worse. However, it is possible that some people with asthma may feel it is more difficult to get an adequate breath while wearing a face mask. While we support and advocate that people follow CDC recommendations, some people with asthma do not feel they can breathe adequately while wearing a mask. These individuals should avoid going to public places as much as possible. Being in public without a face mask may increase the

chances of passing on the COVID-19 virus to others, even if symptoms are not present, or becoming infected with the COVID-19 virus.

- If you feel you can only wear a mask for a short time, plan for any necessary outings to public places to be as short as possible and to wear your mask as long as possible. It may be helpful to try different face coverings at home to find one that is most comfortable, and practice wearing the mask at home for a period before your next outing. Always use a clean mask for each outing. If possible, don't take your mask off and put it back on during a single outing, as touching the mask increases the possibility of contamination.
- We recommend that everyone continue to practice good hand hygiene and limit touching their face, especially when in public. Masks are not a replacement for social distancing, which continues to be extremely important in stopping the spread of the virus.
- We strongly recommend that anyone with asthma continue to take their maintenance asthma medications to keep their symptoms under control and to reduce their risk for an asthma exacerbation or hospitalization.



If you have any questions about your or your loved one's asthma and allergy symptoms, please make an appointment with one of our allergy specialists. We are offering Telehealth as well as in office visits.