



## Know Your Masks to Stay Safe and Healthy

COVID-19 has created an ongoing high demand for high efficiency masks that balance the need for protection, durability and comfort as the fight against COVID-19 and more contagious strains continues. To remain safe and healthy, it's time to put aside ineffective cotton masks for a much-needed higher level of protection.

Per test results published by Business Insider and TSI, **common DIY and cloth masks are ONLY 10% - 28% effective at protecting you against viruses<sup>1</sup>** (see following page for a breakdown of different mask types and their effectiveness).

The **N95 and the KN95, the gold standard for face masks<sup>2</sup>, are respirators that can filter out at least 95% of small particles and viruses.** But to help save the N95 masks for healthcare workers and first-aid responders who are at the greatest risk of exposure, the CDC discourages the public from using N95 masks as much as possible<sup>2</sup>. However, **identical to N95 is the KN95, which is equally accessible and provides virtually the same protection as the N95<sup>2</sup>.** KN95 masks can block and prevent airborne particles from entering airways when worn correctly and balance the highest level of protection with excellent ventilation for comfortable wear.

1: <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-materials-that-filter-particles-best-in-homemade-masks-testing-2020-4>; 2: <https://www.newsweek.com/amplify/bidens-100-day-mask-challenge-where-buy-n95-masks-95-masks-online>.

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# MASK PROTECTION EFFICIENCY



## Highly Effective N95 / KN95

Fits tightly with minimal leakage around edges. Offers the best protection by filtering at least 95 percent of small particles.



## Very Effective Surgical

Fits over mouth and nose. Helps prevent spread of large respiratory droplets when wearer coughs or sneezes.



## Minimally / Ineffective Cloth / DIY

Fits loosely and does not contain any filter. Minimal effectiveness against viruses.

Wearing a mask has become part of the new way of life amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for businesses and workers that have direct and frequent contact with the public. While any mask is better than no mask, knowing your different types of masks and their effectiveness at protecting against viruses can be the difference to remaining safe and healthy.

## Testing of Mask/Material Protection Efficiency

Mask Type	ASTM Level	% of Particles Filtered
N95 / KN95 Mask	ASTM Level 3	95% + <b>Highly Effective</b>
Surgical Mask	ASTM Level 2	80% + <b>Very Effective</b>
3-layer Hanes	Not ASTM safety rated	28% – <b>Minimally Effective</b>
100% Cotton T-shirt*		
Folded Bandana*	Not ASTM safety rated	10% – <b>Ineffective</b>

\* Testing results reported by particle-testing equipment company, TSI, using the same machine that N95 mask makers employ to certify that their respirator masks meet OSHA standards.

See *Business Insider* for the full article and results:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/the-materials-that-filter-particles-best-in-homemade-masks-testing-2020-4>

### Fit is as critical as material choice.

If the mask is not snug around the nose, cheeks and chin, and unfiltered air leaks in from around the mask, the material doesn't matter.

### Filtering must be balanced with breathability.

If a material's filtering is suffocating, it will be harder to breathe through and more unfiltered air will likely be sucked in from around the mask's edges.

**Be careful using unconventional material**, such as furnace filters, vacuum cleaner bags and blue shop towels, as experts caution that breathing in tiny fibers of these commercial materials could be unsafe.