

2.4.2021



With new and more contagious variants of COVID-19 circulating the globe and reported to be spreading in North Carolina, some medical experts are saying it's time to up our mask game by taking extra care about the quality of the “barrier” provided by what we are wearing.

In recent months, a growing number of public figures including football coaches and politicians have been spotted wearing two masks — usually a cloth covering over a medical-grade mask. The purpose of wearing two masks is to improve fit and filtration. And if the masks are layered properly, they can closely simulate the effectiveness of an N95 respirator, which many experts consider to be the gold standard.

A mask that fits well — *and that you will actually wear* — is essential to your own safety and that of our community.

Do I really need to wear double masks?

While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has not updated its [mask guidance](#) to recommend layering masks, to increase your own confidence consider these options:

Option 1: Wear a tightly fitted, multiple-layer cloth covering over a surgical mask. If using a cloth mask with a medical mask, the cloth mask should be made from two or three layers of material. The mask should cover your mouth and nose and form a good seal.

Option 2: Wear a three-layer mask with tightly woven fabric outer layers sandwiching a middle layer made out of a “nonwoven high-efficiency filter material,” such as a vacuum bag filter.

The fit of your mask remains all-important. Here's how you can test your mask for proper fit: Every time you put on a mask, do a “user seal check.” Put your hands over the mask to block the air moving

through it, and exhale gently. You shouldn't feel air coming out the side or up toward your eyes. Then, test to make sure it stays in place by moving your head side to side and all around. Read something and see whether the mask slides around too much when you talk.

But be sure you can breathe! Even the best fitting mask is of no use if you have to take it off to be able to breathe properly or to talk and be understood by other people. If you wear glasses, double masks may make it more likely that your glasses will fog up. Using an anti-fogging wipe and keeping your glasses on top of a close-fitting mask can help.

And as always, keep practicing the 3Ws: Wear a mask, Wait 6 feet apart from other people, and Wash your hands frequently. Stay at home as much as you can. Avoid indoor gatherings.

This article includes excerpts from these sources:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/09/30/mask-guidelines-covid-faq/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/01/26/n95-masks-safest-next-best-options/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/01/27/double-mask-variants-guidance/>



The COVID-19 Community Task Force (CCTF) is a volunteer organization established to engage the community in responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic and to support and augment the County's efforts. The information shared by the CCTF is not an official communication from Pamlico County, its Health Department or the Pamlico County COVID19 Task Force.