

Does wearing two masks provide more protection?

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Will wearing two masks better protect me from the virus?
AP Illustration/Peter Hamlin

Does wearing two masks provide more protection?

It depends, but it's possible that doubling up could help in some situations.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommends](#) wearing a cloth mask made with two or more layers, and ensuring it covers your nose and mouth. The agency says it should fit snugly so there aren't any gaps at the sides of your face.

Wearing just one mask should be enough for most situations, as long as it fits well and isn't loose, said Dr. David Hamer, an infectious disease expert at Boston University.

"Starting out with a good mask to begin with is going to be key," Hamer said.

Still, some people might want extra protection if they're at risk for [severe illness](#) if infected or will be in situations where they expect to be around others for extended periods, such as on a plane.

One option in scenarios when you want extra protection is to wear a cloth mask as well as a regular surgical mask, said Dr. Monica Gandhi, an infectious [disease](#) expert at the University of California, San Francisco.

Gandhi said that combination—with either mask on top—could help achieve a similar effect as the N95 mask. She recommended the added protection for people who will be indoors in areas where transmission rates are high—which could reflect the circulation of more contagious variants.

Another option Gandhi and a colleague [recommend](#) for situations where you want "maximum" protection: A two-layer cloth mask that has a filter material in between.

With single cloth [masks](#) for everyday use, Gandhi noted it's important that they're made of tightly woven material and have at least two layers, which creates "an [obstacle course](#)" that makes it harder for virus-carrying particles to break through.

More information: [Can I use a face shield instead of a mask?](#)

[Should I get a COVID-19 vaccine if I've had the virus?](#)

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