Advisory – Home-made Cloth Mask

Objective of the guidance note

To support Pacific Island countries and territories with guidance on home-made cloth masks for use by members of the community when visiting public settings and more importantly in areas of significant COVID-19 community-based transmission.

Background

1. The COVID-19 virus is a respiratory disease that is transmitted via droplets through close contacts of infected individuals and bodily fluids during coughing, sneezing. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets.

2. Even when you are wearing a facemask, frequent hand hygiene, avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes and keep a distance of more than 1 meter apart and frequent environmental cleaning are recommended to prevent transmission of COVID-19 infections.

3. There is a global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) particularly N95 masks and surgical masks that is occurring that will have significant impact on the ability of healthcare workers to safely manage patients. There are options available such as the implementation of rational use of PPE that Ministries of Health can explore to ensure that surgical and N95 masks are available for Healthcare workers.

4. The other option involves the use of cloth homemade masks as a supplementary public health measure by people in the community when they are in public settings (e.g. supermarket, banks etc.) and where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (CDC).

Key Points

- Homemade masks are intended to be reusable and must be washed between re-use.
- **Do *not* just wear a standard bandana or scarf**. Follow the instructions in the appendix to create a mask that has multiple layers and more tightly covers your face.
- Homemade masks, can either be sewn or cut out from a T-shirt or Bandana. See appendix for instructions.
- If you are in a situation whereby you have to dispose your homemade cloth mask, follow the instructions on how to remove it and dispose appropriately in a bin and wash your hands.

Homemade cloth facemask should:
- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face and cover the mouth and nose;
- be secured with ties or ear loops,

- include at the minimum 2 layers of fabric,
- be cotton fabric due to it's ability to withstand excessive laundering and it is also breathable, use - 100% cotton or cotton blend jersey knit 6 to 8 oz
- allow for breathing without restriction,
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Who should not wear a homemade facemask?
- Children under age 2,
- anyone who has trouble breathing,
- anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

Do's and don'ts when wearing a homemade face mask
Wearing a facemask alone will not prevent anyone from acquiring COVID-19 infection. It must be combined with good respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene and physical distancing of more than 1 meter apart.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose or face,
- Change masks when moist,
- Do not leave masks dangling around the neck,
- Perform hand hygiene after touching or changing a used mask and
- Keep a bag handy to store a used mask for laundering later.

How to wash your homemade cloth facemask

- A face mask can be hand washed or machine washed with detergent and water,
- Hang in the sun to dry.

How to remove your homemade facemask

- Avoid touching the front of the mask, eyes, nose or mouth.
- Remove the mask by holding on to the straps and remove away from the face.
- Wash immediately or store in a bag with tie until you have access to laundering.

References:

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html

https://about.kaiserpermanente.org/content/dam/internet/kp/comms/import/uploads/2020/03/02_COVID_Mask-Instructions_v9.pdf

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d_RaKdqeck

https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-infection-prevention-and-control-for-health-care-workers-caring-for-patients-with-suspected-or-confirmed-2019-ncov

Appendix: Sew and No Sew Instructions

(CDC website https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html)

Sewing Instructions

Materials

- Two 10"x6" rectangles of cotton fabric
- Two 6" pieces of elastic (or rubber bands, string, cloth strips, or hair ties)
- Needle and thread (or bobby pin)
- Scissors
- Sewing machine

Tutorial

1. Cut out two 10-by-6-inch rectangles of cotton fabric. Use tightly woven cotton, such as quilting fabric or cotton sheets. T-shirt fabric will work in a pinch. Stack the two rectangles; you will sew the mask as if it was a single piece of fabric.
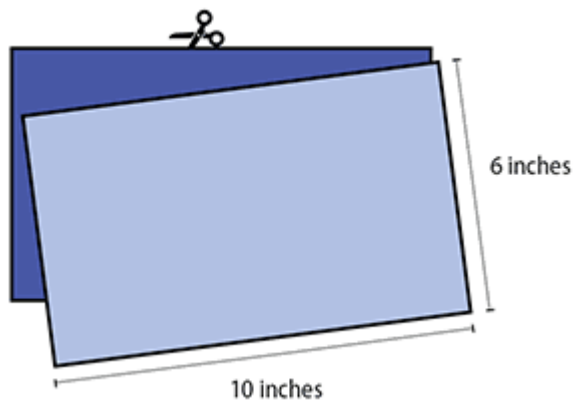
2. Fold over the long sides ¼ inch and hem. Then fold the double layer of fabric over ½ inch along the short sides and stitch down.
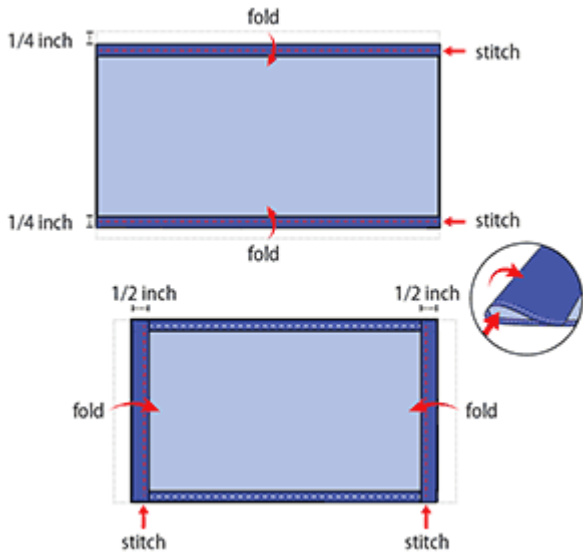
3. Run a 6-inch length of 1/8-inch wide elastic through the wider hem on each side of the mask. These will be the ear loops. Use a large needle or a bobby pin to thread it through. Tie the ends tight.
Don't have elastic? Use hair ties or elastic head bands. If you only have string, you can make the ties longer and tie the mask behind your head.
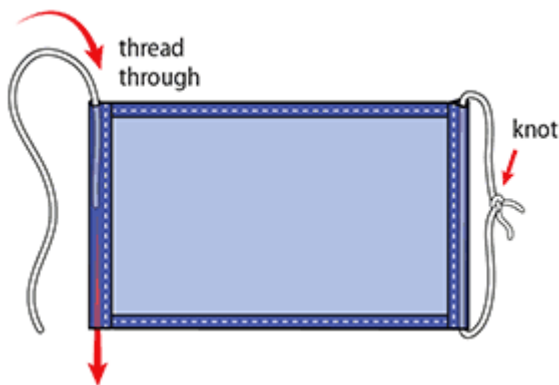
4. Gently pull on the elastic so that the knots are tucked inside the hem. Gather the sides of the mask on the elastic and adjust so the mask fits your face. Then securely stitch the elastic in place to keep it from slipping.
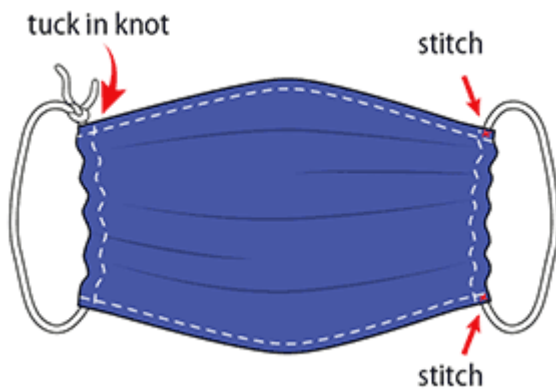
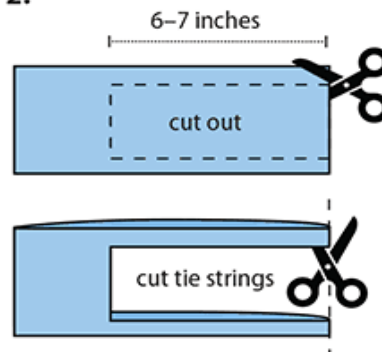**No Sew Method**

Cut out T-shirt Covering
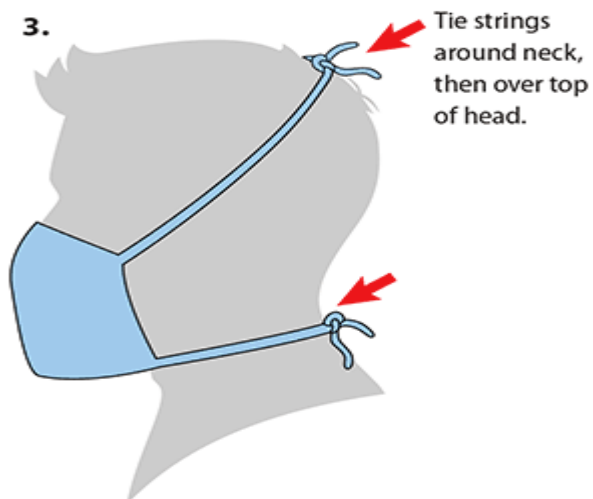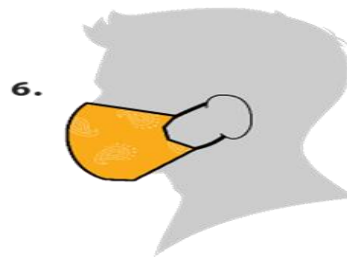
Materials

- T-shirt
- Scissors

Tutorial

1.

7–8 inches

2.

6–7 inches

cut out

cut tie strings

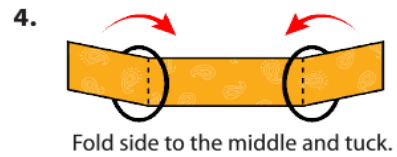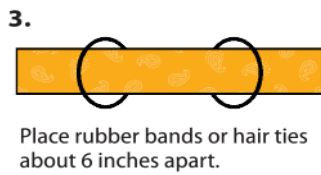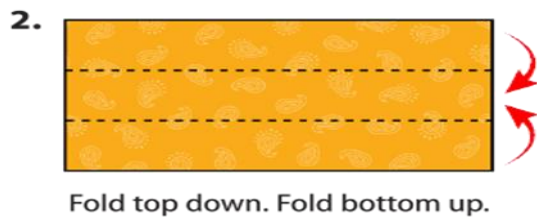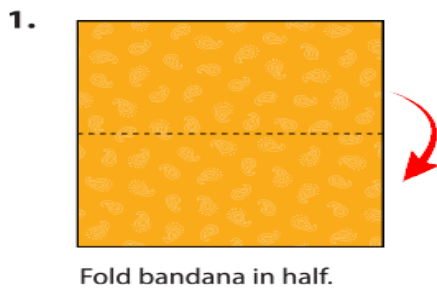**3.** Tie strings around neck, then over top of head.
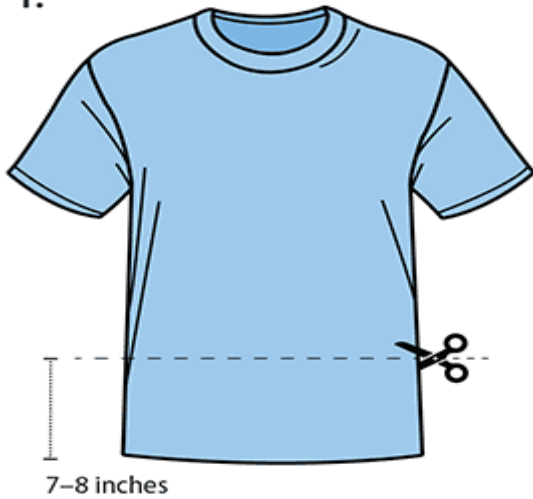
Bandana Face Covering (no sew method)

<u>Materials</u>

- Bandana (or square cotton cloth approximately 20"x20")

- Rubber bands (or hair ties)

- Scissors (if you are cutting your own cloth)

<u>Tutorial</u>

1.

Fold bandana in half.

2.

Fold top down. Fold bottom up.

3.

Place rubber bands or hair ties about 6 inches apart.

4.

Fold side to the middle and tuck.

5.

6.

References:

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https://about.kaiserpermanente.org/content/dam/internet/kp/comms/import/uploads/2020/03/02_COVID_Mask-Instructions_v9.pdf

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0d_RaKdgeck