

Sewing Surgical Face Masks

Makers and Crafters can help with the shortage of surgical masks!

Sewn masks have not been scientifically tested, but they certainly can provide some level of protection for individuals and health care workers as we face a serious shortage of regular surgical masks. They could be particularly valuable for lower risk health care providers, and since are washable, provide a good economic, reusable alternative as well.

There is information and pattern links below about how to create sewn masks based on materials available and various skill levels.



Fabric Choice and Preparation: It is important to use a tightly woven fabric.

Quilters and Sewers know their high-quality quilting cottons vs. less tight woven fabric. Think of weight like Kona Quilting Cotton as a gauge. Also, it is suggested to use a cotton duck, canvas or similar weight for the outer layer, and the cotton fabric on inner layer (would need a tweak on some patterns to use two fabrics). Just allow an extra ½ inch or so as cut fabric pieces to allow for the two fabrics variation and additional seam.

- It is important to not use a polyester, stretchy, or textured fabric.
- If using just cotton quilting type fabric, please consider one of the patterns that allows for a filter of some sort. A filter might be a piece of HEPA filter (like for vacuums) that can be cut to fit the pocket! Or it might be a not-too-stiff piece of a non-woven such as light-medium interfacing, another layer of fabric, or a piece of surgical fabric (like surgical gowns are made of). Or get creative and adapt a pattern to have an optional filter pocket.
- If your supplies/skill-level are at just the cotton basic mask, that is OK.
- Pre-washing of fabric in HOT water is suggested so they won't shrink in hospital laundry.

Constructing the Mask Ties: Make sure they are long enough, and that they will tie securely.

- Some patterns use elastic loops, which can fit nicely over ears, but may be less an option as stores are out/restocking. Elastic loops can be knot-tied rather than sewn and OK to leave not tucked into the mask channel. Allows for adjusting size.
- Bias tape can make great ties. Or you can make your own, using bias tape as the ideal. If you can bias cut, it curves better as the mask wraps around face, but straight cut is OK. It is important to have the mask fit snugly to be protective covering nose, and mouth/chin areas. You may need to adapt patterns based on supplies available.
- Be sure what you create does not have ties that fray easily.

Nose shaping: Most surgical masks have a flexible piece of metal along the top edge to fit over the nose.

- A 4-½ inch length of craft pipe cleaner sewn into middle of the top edge of the mask can work very well. Just push it up against the top seam/edge and carefully do a top stitch along the edge against the pipe cleaner, being careful not to hit it with your sewing machine needle. If pipe cleaners are not available, that's ok, it's just a very nice addition if you can. This was tested on different patterns and worked very well.

SOME LINKS for Mask Patterns

There are others as well – take fabric, filter and nose shaping into consideration with any pattern. Consider doing some at slightly larger size, the sizes in patterns do not cover larger faces as well, so consider multiple sizes. For example, the Fancy Tiger pattern, works nicely with an 8-inch width (up from 7 inches).

- 1. Surgical mask with Bias tape ties:** The pattern uses cotton for both pieces, can be adapted for one-layer heavier fabric for outer layer and one layer regular cotton for lining. Just add for the extra seam when cutting fabric. Fancy Tiger Crafts (Denver) has posted information and video.

https://www.instagram.com/p/B-Ai_5rpJD7/



2. **Surgical mask with elastic** (a bit of fussy sewing, but nicely done.) Gather Here (Boston) video and pattern. Can be done with cotton fabric, as this mask design allows for the insert of a “filter” or another layer.
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jOucLrVCjCEGkKijvR6l8Q9jjQiK5lA6/view>
3. **Surgical mask with elastic (basic pattern)** The pattern uses cotton for both pieces, can be adapted for one-layer heavier fabric for outer layer, and one layer regular cotton for lining. Just add for the extra seam when cutting ideally. Can adapt for ties as well. <https://thestitchingscientist.com/2020/03/how-to-sew-a-face-mask.html>
4. **Surgical mask (shaped)** designed for two weights fabric. OR cotton with pocket insert for “filter” layer. This mask is more fitted over the face. With cotton duck/cotton combo, the sample worked nicely and was tested with both elastic and bias tape ties as well as the nose piece pipe-cleaner addition.



The pattern uses cotton for both pieces, can be adapted for one-layer heavier fabric for outer layer, and one-layer regular cotton for lining. Just add for the extra seam when cutting. The pattern is designed for elastic cording (or narrow elastic) but can be adapted to use ties instead. The designer has also put together a variation for a pocket for a “filter” that would work with just quilting weight cotton fabric.



<https://www.craftpassion.com/face-mask-sewing-pattern/>

Where to drop off your finished masks:

Rancho Cordova Food Locker
10497 Coloma Road
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Drop Off Hours:

9:30 a.m. to 1:20 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays

Masks will be distributed to meet local needs in Rancho Cordova, and to hospitals and clinics in coordination with the Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society (SSVMS).

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