

COMMUNITY USE OF FACE MASKS IN SOUTH SUDAN

RATIONAL

Current information available suggests that the route of human-to-human transmission of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV2) is either via respiratory droplets or contact with infected surfaces or objects. Any person who is within 2 meters with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19, is at risk of being exposed to potentially infectious respiratory droplets.

Evidence suggests also that in most case, COVID-19 is transmitted by symptomatic laboratory-confirmed cases. However, during “pre-symptomatic¹” period some infected persons can be contagious and therefore transmit the virus to others. Additionally, pre-symptomatic transmission has been documented through contact tracing efforts and enhanced investigation of clusters of confirmed cases. This is supported by data on asymptomatic testing positives and pre-symptomatic testing positive for COVID-19 from 1-3 days before they develop symptoms.

Based on a risk-based approach, it is recommended that the purpose of masks is for source control (used by infected persons) and NOT for prevention of COVID-19 (used by healthy persons) among healthy individuals. Vulnerability, risk of exposure including population density and feasibility will influence the decision making. The advantage of the use of mask by healthy people in the community setting include reducing potential exposure risk from infected person during the “pre-symptomatic” period and stigmatization of individuals wearing mask for source control. However, the use of a mask alone is insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection, and other measures should also be adopted including hand hygiene and other IPC measures. It is critical to emphasize that maintaining 6-foot social distancing remains important to slowing the spread of the virus.

Based on above evidence, wearing of cloth face coverings in public settings (e.g., market places grocery stores and pharmacies) IS RECOMMENDED, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission or where social distancing is limited.

This South Sudan **Ministry of Health’s document** therefore recommends the community use of cloth face coverings (or mask) in public settings. The purpose of the cloth masks is to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others, by diminishing the number of respiratory droplets that wearers put out into the environment. MOH also emphasizes that face covers are **a measure not to protect the wearer but to protect others from the wearer, who may be potentially spreading virus even if they are not yet ill.** Good social distancing practices will mitigate risk more effectively.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Cloth masks are however NOT considered appropriate for health care workers. Studies that evaluated use of cloth masks in health care facilities found that health care workers using cotton cloth masks were at increased risk of infection compared with those who wore medical masks. Medical masks and N95 respirators should be reserved for health care workers, in view of the global shortage of supplies.

It is important to note that no one measure, including the use of a masks alone is insufficient to provide an adequate level of protection against COVID-19, and a combination of other preventive measures need to be practiced and adhered to. These include:

- practicing social distancing of at least 2 meters
- frequent washing hands with soap and water
- Using a sanitizer frequently (if available)
- cleaning and disinfecting surfaces regularly

¹ The Pre-symptomatic or incubation period for COVID-19: Time between exposure to the virus and symptom onset, is on average 5-6 days, but can be as long as 14 days

- avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- practicing respiratory etiquette by coughing or sneezing into ones elbow or a tissue paper that should be immediately appropriately dispensed.
- Staying home IF feeling sick with flu-like symptoms and call 6666

Quality of a good Cloth Mask

A good Cloth Mask should:

- Fit comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing with restriction
- Be able to be laundered and dried without damage or change to shape



How to put on a mask:

1. Ensure you are using a clean mask.
2. Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching mask.
3. Pick up mask by touching ear loops (or ties) only.
4. Avoid touching mask itself.
5. Hold both ear loops and place a loop around each ear.
6. Fit mask around mouth, nose, and chin.

Removing a mask

1. Grab ear loops only and lift the mask off ears.
2. be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth
3. Pull bottom of mask off and away from mouth and chin.
4. If you plan to reuse your mask right away, place it in a clean paper bag so it will not contaminate other surfaces. Otherwise, proceed directly with laundry
5. If it is a single-use mask, discard it directly into the garbage.
6. Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.