



The CHESS Tournament

Safety News and Views you can use.

Complete Health, Environmental & Safety Services, Inc.

Complete Health Environmental & Safety Services, Inc. Newsletter

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Is everyone working at home? Have the neck aches started?

We're developing a **webinar on ergonomics** for the home office. If you're interested in participating or having your employees attend, let us know. Contact Noel at nschneider@chess-safety.com or 651-842-9215.

More on SARS-COV-2 (Are you sick of it yet?)

You're masked up, so you're safe now, right? Not so fast.

We want people who work closely with infected people to wear N95 filtering facepieces, which are very effective at blocking the virus **if they fit well**. The limiting factor isn't the respirator material. It's how well it fits the user's face. If it doesn't seal well, it doesn't provide much protection. Surgical masks and home-made masks aren't designed to seal tightly and aren't nearly as effective at filtering microscopic particles.

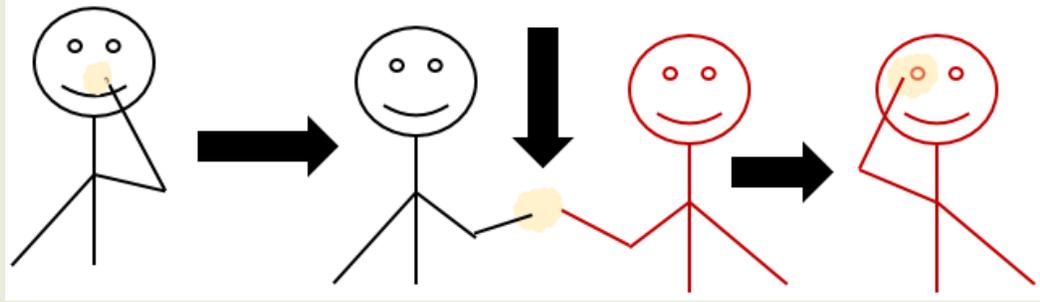
Surgical masks and home-made masks are designed to keep big droplets from getting out, not to protect you from breathing in contaminants. Think of your home-made mask or surgical mask (or even an N95 you had left over from a home improvement project) as an added layer of protection **for others**. It isn't a substitute for staying away and washing your hands.

COVID-19 is transmitted, mainly, from close contact with other people - coughing on them, talking on them, breathing on them. Some transmission likely occurs when someone coughs onto a surface; someone else touches that surface, then touches his or her mucous membranes. A mask may help capture any virus emitted from the person wearing it - but don't let up on keeping your distance.

1. If you **stay away from people**, the unseen droplets they spew out when talking won't land on your face, and vice versa.

2. If you cough or sneeze, droplets can be propelled some distance, even more than the six-foot distance recommended by health experts. Wearing a

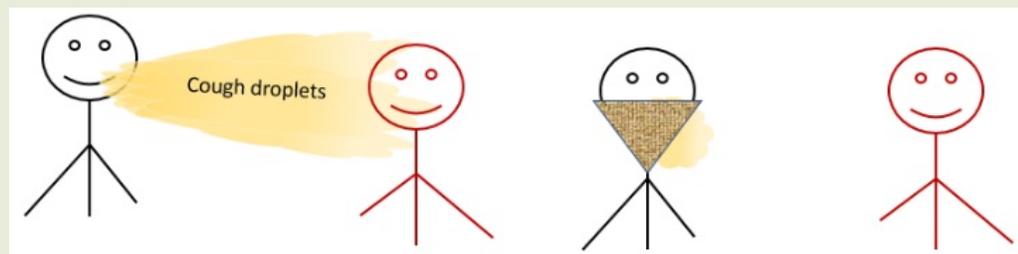
home-made mask might reduce the number of droplets that can be spread that way (but it won't stop them completely).



3. If you wipe your hand across your runny nose, then use that hand to give someone your credit card, then that other person rubs their eye, virus that was in your nose can be transferred to that person's eyes (one of the mucous membranes that lets the virus into your body).

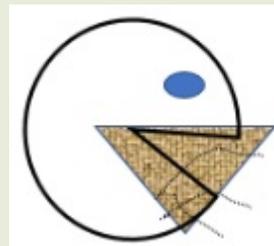
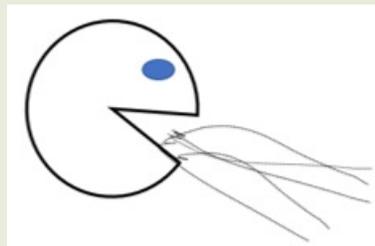
4. If you wear a face mask, you can't wipe your hand across your runny nose as easily.

5. If you wear a face mask, the fabric will capture a lot of those droplets from talking, coughing or sneezing, so they won't travel through the air. But some still could get through. Because the number may be a lot less, the other person's risk of disease is likely to be lowered.



6. The droplets will be captured on the inside of the face mask. Most of the droplet is just water (that's what makes up most of your mucus). Could the virus be dislodged when the droplet dries out? We know it isn't likely from N95 filtering facepieces, because that's been studied. But we can't be sure from other fabrics.

7. We know that people can transmit the virus even before they have



symptoms. If you're infected and not yet showing symptoms, you'll probably transmit fewer infectious droplets if you're wearing a mask.

Caring for a face mask:

a) Treat the outside as contaminated by others. You don't want that part against your face. Use sanitizer on your hands before you remove it. When you remove it, fold it inwards, if you must reuse it.

b) Use hand sanitizer before you put a used mask back on, and then immediately after you put it on. Again, assume the outside is contaminated.

c) Store the mask in a clean location - a paper bag works well. If it's at all damp, don't store it in plastic. You don't need a moldy mask.

d) Wash the mask often. The ideal would be washing it each day (they're cheap to make. Go fashionable, and use a different one each day).

e) Don't want to wear a mask? Don't want to wash your hands? Don't go out. If you don't have any contact with anyone who has contact with someone who has been near someone who works with someone who has the virus, you won't get it.

f) Don't forget to stay away from others and to wash your hands. Those are the most important steps we can take to stop the spread of COVID-19.

OSHA Updates

Shortages of N95 filtering facepieces

Any employer who normally provides their employees with respirators, particularly N95 filtering facepiece respirators (N95FFR), knows that it is very difficult to get these now. These are recommended for some work tasks and required for others. There may be ways to reduce the need for these or to change to another type of respirator.

- Can the work be done wet, reducing dust levels and the need for masks?
- Is local ventilation an option?
- Can the work be delayed? Or is there another way to do the work?
- Could the employee wear a half-mask respirator with cartridges, or a powered air purifying respirator?

If you have employees who have worn N95 FFR for tasks in the past and you want guidance on options to eliminate their need or substitute another type of respirator, please contact us. This is one of Janet's areas of expertise. You can reach out to her at [jkeyes\[at\]chess-safety.com](mailto:jkeyes[at]chess-safety.com).

How Great Is the Risk? And How Can You Lower It?

OSHA recently published a **worker exposure risk assessment pyramid** for exposure to COVID-19. Jobs in the Very High exposure risk category include healthcare workers and those working directly with people who are known to have (or had) COVID-19.

Medium exposure includes workers with frequent or close contact with others who may be infected. This would include store clerks.

Low exposure will be most workers who have minimal contact with coworkers or the public.

There are ways to reduce employee exposures:

- Distancing. Separate employees whenever possible.
- Physical barriers. Companies, such as nParallel (<https://www.nparallel.com/personal-protective-environments-products>) in Plymouth, sell shields and signage reminding people about distancing.
- Staggered start and break times.
- Allow for frequent hand washing.
- Disinfect frequently-touched areas several times throughout the day.
- Whenever possible, have employees work from home.



Can an employee refuse to work if you do not supply a mask?

Certainly not because of COVID-19, if the employee is in a medium or low risk category. An employee has the right to refuse work if there is " a reasonable belief of imminent danger of death or serious physical harm." If an employee is not working in close proximity to other employees, is not working with anyone who has or is suspected of having COVID-19, there is no imminent danger. If an employee expresses concern about working without a mask, the employer should take steps to reduce potential exposures (see the paragraph right above this, on ways to reduce employee exposure). The reality is that masks are very difficult to obtain right now - and they aren't a substitute for the other control measures of distance, barriers and handwashing.

Workers' Compensation for COVID-19

The Minnesota workers' compensation regulations were expanded to include COVID-19 for very specific groups of employees: emergency responders (police, fire, paramedic, EMT), health care providers, and child care providers for first responders and health care workers.

The date of injury will be the date the employee was not able to work due to symptoms of or diagnosis of COVID-19.

If someone who does not fall into the emergency responder, health care worker, or child care provider categories believes they contracted COVID-19 from work, it is the employee's burden to show that the illness arose out of or in the course of work.

For specific information and more details about these changes, please see the MN Department of Labor & Industry Updates Related to COVID-19: https://www.dli.mn.gov/updates?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Severe Weather Awareness Week

Spring will arrive and stay, and with it the possibility of severe weather, as we saw with recent tornadoes causing fatalities in Georgia. Statewide tornado drills are scheduled in Minnesota for **Thursday, April 16**. For more information on this, severe weather safety, flood safety and more, check the [Minnesota Homeland Security and Emergency Management website](#).