
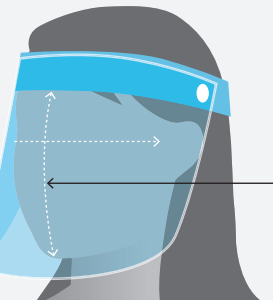


Should I wear a face mask or face shield?

People can choose to wear either a face mask or face shield when they leave the house, according to the Ministry of Health's guidelines. For the general public, a face mask or a face shield alone provides adequate protection, doctors say. However, those working in high-risk settings should wear both a mask and shield.

	How to use	How they work	Pros and cons	When to use
FACE MASK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your nose and mouth are covered. • There should be no gaps between the mask and your face. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects your nose and mouth from droplets that may contain virus particles. • Prevents the virus from being spread by a sick person by acting as a barrier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevents large infectious droplets from landing on a person's nose and mouth. • However, airborne aerosols (smaller invisible droplets) can still enter through the gaps. • There is also a global shortage of surgical masks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All types of masks, including face shields and reusable and homemade masks, offer adequate basic protection for the general public, says the Ministry of Health. • Plastic spit guards which mainly cover the mouth are not acceptable. • Surgical masks should be saved for those who need them most, such as healthcare workers.
FACE SHIELD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your whole face is covered, from ear to ear and forehead to chin. • There should be no gaps between the securing headpiece and the plastic shield 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects your eyes and other parts of the face from droplets that may contain virus particles, and prevents the virus from being spread by a sick person by acting as a barrier. • It also prevents face masks from getting wet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively easy to make and can be cleaned easily. • A person's face is also fully visible, which some people may prefer. • However, it lacks a good seal around the face, allowing aerosols to penetrate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare workers are generally advised to use both face shields and face masks, as their work involves long hours of contact with patients and puts them at a higher risk of infection.

The more important emphasis for both must be on correct usage. If either is not worn properly, then there is no longer any protective effect.



DR LOUISA SUN,
associate consultant of infectious diseases at Alexandra Hospital

If everyone plays their part in wearing a face mask, practises safe distancing and avoids visiting public spaces when they are ill, it will greatly help reduce the transmission rate of viruses.



DR GOH SIEW HOR,
assistant director of clinical services at NTUC Health

Non-N95 masks prevent one from spreading the germs, but do not protect the person from inhaling the virus.



DR KEITH TSOU,
director of clinical services at National University Polyclinics

VIRAL DROPLETS



Droplets from coughing and sneezing

- A cough: 3,000 droplets.
- A sneeze: 40,000 droplets.



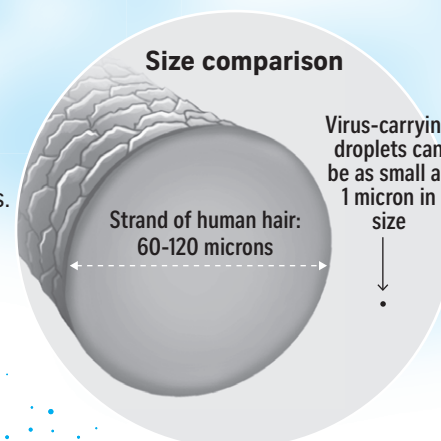
Droplets from talking and breathing

- An infected person with mild or no symptoms talking in a poorly ventilated space for five minutes can generate as many viral droplets as an infectious cough.
- Commuters should **avoid talking on trains and buses.**

Aerosols (smaller invisible droplets)

- These micron-sized droplets form a cloud that can linger in the air for minutes before they settle on surfaces.
- It is currently unclear whether Covid-19 can be transmitted through aerosols.

Size comparison



Larger visible droplets

- These fall to the floor within about two metres.

Recommended safe distance

- The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention recommends safe distancing of **two metres** based on the assumption that transmission occurs primarily through the larger droplets.
- The World Health Organisation and Singapore's Ministry of Health recommend physical distancing of at least **one metre.**

Travel range of aerosols

- However, it doesn't mean there are no more droplets beyond two metres.
- Researchers from MIT have observed smaller cough droplets travelling up to five metres and sneeze droplets travelling up to eight metres.
- The travel range of these aerosols suggests that keeping a distance of **two metres or more** can potentially reduce the possibility of transmission.

