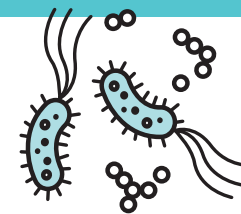


Wash those masks

Experts recommend that you wash your mask once a day to prevent possible infections. The Straits Times worked with testing lab Eurofins to find out just how contaminated a mask can get with prolonged use.



The masks were tested for:

- Bacteria
- Yeast and mould
- *Staphylococcus aureus* (commonly linked to skin infections)
- *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (linked to rashes)

Presence of bacteria, yeast and mould

• The experiment found that masks worn for a longer period have a higher bacterial count and larger amounts of yeast and mould, although *Staphylococcus aureus*

and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* are not present.

• While a higher bacterial count does not necessarily mean a person will fall sick,

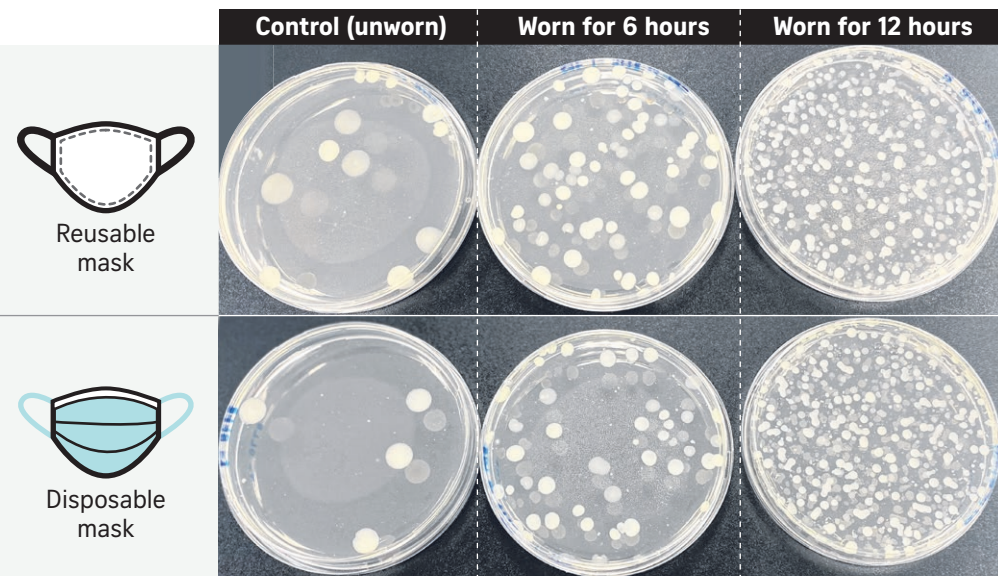
it increases the chances of that happening, say experts.

• When the micro-environment within the mask is warm and moist, it is perfect for

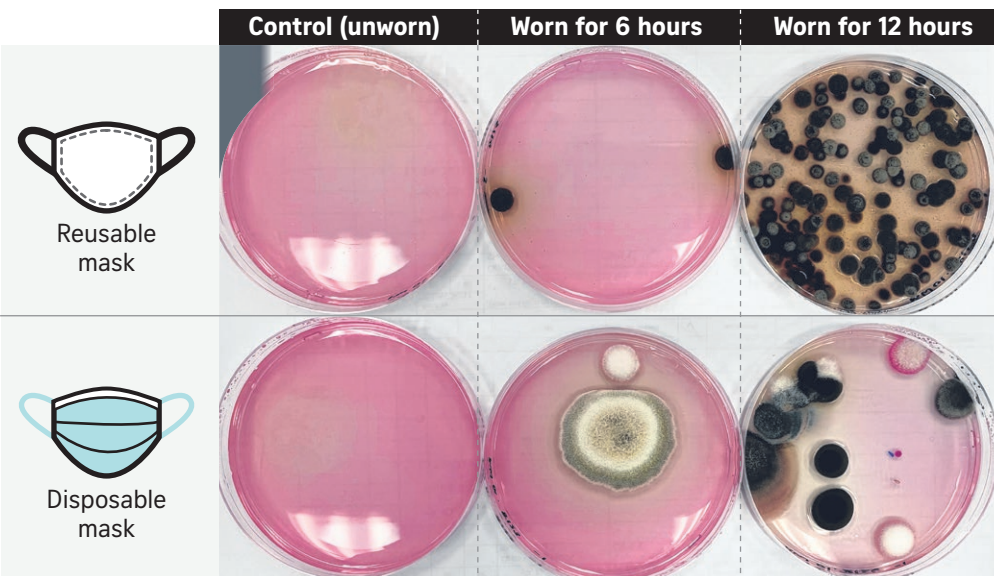
fungal acne to thrive.

• An outbreak of acne occurs when yeast multiplies and inflames the hair follicles.

Total bacterial count in agar plate after one week of culturing*



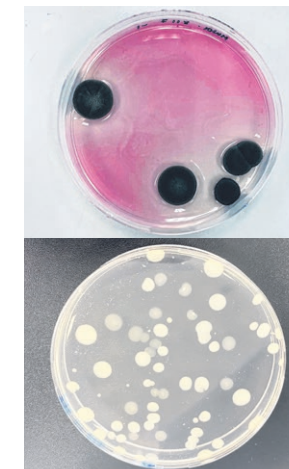
Yeast and mould in agar plate after one week of culturing



Unwashed for a week

• ST also looked at a reusable mask that was worn for six hours in total and left unwashed for a week.

• Yeast and mould (below) and bacteria (bottom) remained on the mask. This shows that masks that are not washed regularly are a breeding ground for germs, as they retain oil, dead skin cells, as well as bacteria.



NOTE: *Further analysis has to be done to identify the presence of harmful strains.

PHOTOS: EUROFINS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS