

FACE MASK MAJOR TYPES, COMPARISON CHART



FLAT, DISPOSABLE

Though most are uncertified “civilian” masks, they are available w/ Medical-Surgical (IIR-IIIR) Certification’ 3-5 plies

Inexpensive, but effectiveness of filter is somewhat defeated because usual poor fit causes up to 45% of air to leak around the mask. Mask adjusters, (take the ear-loops from off the back of the ears) also improve the fit to reduce leakage & advised. Often reused, these masks are meant to be worn for a max of 4 hours. If sanitizing is desired, ozone or UVC methods are best, as application of liquid sanitizers degrades performance of the mask significantly. Careful hand washing & air-drying is possible, but this also degrades mask filter performance.



FOLDING RESPIRATOR

KN95, FFP2-3 or N95 Certification; Often up to 5-6 ply, incl. cotton layer for comfort (absorbs moisture from the breath)

Easy construction means best function vs cost ratio: Unlike N95, KN95 certification includes a max leak level. Design most easily fits all faces w/ less leakage & most have “electret” filters to stop ultra-small particles & w/ common certification up to KN100/FFP-3 (ie: N100) available. “Breath valve” for comfort available. Can be made to be reusable (& even compostable though not common)



CUP RESPIRATOR

KN95, FFP2-3, N95 Certification; 3-4 ply

Most costly & often reserved for “first responders” & medical staff, it is NOT true that these always provide the best filtration or the most effective protection; or that the N95 standard is the most strict. Rigid construction, to ensure best face contact, makes them uncomfortable & difficult to fit to the face to minimize air leaks. Electret filtration advisable but not assured. “Breath valve” available.



REUSABLE, COTTON

Some have replaceable, certified filters, but entire masks are never certified

Most comfortable, but often “homemade”, loose/leaky, but reusable & some factory-made examples are come w/ a “breath valve” for further comfort. But, though providing some blockage of breath droplets these are never certified &, like flat masks, provide the least effective protection against contagion.