

# UW-Madison: All you need to know about wearing a mask

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As the U.S. grapples with surges of new COVID-19 infections, everyone is looking for ways to slow the spread of the disease. In this Badger Talks video, Professor of Population Health Sciences Ajay Sethi says that we should continue to turn to an old standby: masks.

Wearing a mask helps prevent the distribution of tiny droplets from the mouth and nose that can carry the virus. Since many people who are infected with COVID-19 don't know they're sick, wearing a mask can help them avoid unwittingly infecting other people. And by reducing the likelihood of inhaling droplets, a mask protects the wearer as well. Sethi says it's a community issue, too. By wearing a mask, you help protect your loved ones and your neighbors, not just yourself.

It's especially important to wear a mask when you can't maintain a wide berth from other people, such as inside a store. But if you're in a crowded outdoor space, such as a busy park or a sidewalk, keep a mask handy to put on when you approach others.

While masks were hard to come by early in the pandemic, many commercial cloth masks are now available. Or you can sew your own. Sethi says it's still best to reserve single-use, medical-grade masks for healthcare workers. So keep a stack of washable cloth masks on hand - enough to make it to laundry day.