Guidelines for the use of Masks

The Government has mandated that all Ugandans aged 6 years and above wear face masks when in public places to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19. Below are guidelines on the use of face masks.

1.	**What are the types of masks on the Ugandan market?**	There are two types of masks on the Ugandan market namely:
		  i. Medical masks
		  ii. Non- Medical masks
		• The medical masks include: N95, KN95 and surgical masks.
		• The non-medical masks are made out of fabric (cloth).
		• Medical masks should be reserved for health workers in health facilities.
		• It is dangerous to reuse medical masks because and you can get infected with COVID-19 or another disease

2.	**How do face masks work?**	• COVID-19 is spread through sneezing, coughing, talking and breathing. • When an infected person wears a face mask, the mask blocks the virus from spreading when they are sneezing, coughing, talking or breathing. • The mask also prevents droplets from an infected person from reaching the nose and mouth of the person wearing it.
3.	**What type of masks should be used by the community?**	• The community is encouraged to use non-medical masks. These are masks made out of fabric/cloth e.g. cotton masks. • The non-medical mask should be made out of two layers of cloth and can have a filter in the middle of the two cloth layers. Examples of filters to use include: a paper towel, a coffee filter or polypropylene; the material often used for non-plastic shopping bags. • Any of these filters can be placed between the 2 cloth layers to improve the safety of the mask. • The filter can be removed before washing the mask. Poly propylene is washable and reusable.
4.	**How protective are cloth and other face masks?**	• According to US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, when a double cloth mask is used with a filter inside, it provides 95% protection from COVID-19.
5.	**Who should wear a mask?**	• All adults • Children aged 6 years and above

6.	**Who should not wear a mask?**	• People with breathing difficulties should first seek advice from medical personnel before wearing a face mask. • Children aged 2- 5 years are very active therefore they cannot take care of their masks and observe the correct hygiene practices. These children should only put on masks under close supervision. • Children below 2 years should not wear a mask as they have a small lung capacity.
7.	**When should one wear a mask?**	• When going to public places – e.g. work, public transport, markets, supermarkets, shops, classrooms, places of worship, healthcare facilities etc. • When acceptable physical distancing (at least 2 metres) is not possible • When one has a cough, cold or sore throat even when at home • When at home and visited by a person who is not part of the household • When in any congested area • At workplaces, especially when with colleagues • DO NOT wear a mask when running, jogging, digging, ploughing or doing other physical activities • It is not necessary to wear a mask when you are alone in the car but have it ready in case you pick up another passenger during the course of the journey or when you get out of the car.
8.	**Does one still need to stay at least 2 meters away from people when wearing a mask?**	• Yes, because infection can still go through your eyes and when you touch other surfaces.
9.	**How should one put on a mask properly?**	• To properly put on the mask, first clean your hands by washing them with soap and running water or using a sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. • Hold onto the straps or loops and place it over your mouth, nose and chin. Make sure that there are no gaps between your face and the mask. • Avoid touching the front and inner sides of the mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and running water The mask be kept on even when talking. It can only be removed when eating or drinking. • To remove the mask, use the straps, do not touch the front of mask, place the mask in a clean container such as an envelope or hang it on nails, hooks etc. so that it does not touch any surfaces. • Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer whenever you touch the front or inside of the mask

10.	Does the use of a mask by itself remove the risk of getting infected with COVID-19?	• No, it does not. Wearing a mask must be done alongside other COVID-19 prevention measures to ensure full protection. These include: • Washing your hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer • Maintaining a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) from other persons • Avoiding touching the mouth, eyes and the nose • Avoiding handshakes and hugs
11.	How should one care for the mask?	• Keep the mask hanging in a clean area or in a clean envelope/container when not wearing it. • Wash, dry and if you can, iron re-useable fabric/cloth(cotton) masks daily. • Remove the filter before washing the mask. • If the filter is washable (e.g. polypropylene) wash and dry it separately
12.	What precautions should be taken when handling another person's mask?	• Handle with the knowledge that another person's mask is potentially infectious. • Ensure that the mask does not come into contact with your mouth, eyes or nose. • After handling another person's mask, wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
13.	Can wearing a mask and repeated use of sanitizer interfere with one's immunity?	• No, it cannot. Masks and sanitizers help to get rid of undesirable germs but do not interfere with one's immunity.
14.	Should air conditioning be used in cars, offices, places of worship etc. during this time of COVID-19?	• It is not advisable to use air conditioning. A well-ventilated place with free air circulation is advised. Therefore, keep windows open.
15.	What are the specifications for homemade masks?	• It is better to use 100% cotton fabric/cloth • Use two layers of fabric/cloth with a pouch for a filter. The filter can be made of: polypropylene, tissue or toilet paper • The mask should be wide enough to cover the nose, mouth and the chin • The loops should not be too tight for comfort but there should not be any gaps between the face and the mask
16.	How can one dispose off masks?	• Fabric/cloth masks can be re-used as they are washable. They can be used as long as the fabric is not worn out, develop holes or is so thin that light can be seen through it. When the above happens, dispose by burning or throwing in a pit latrine. • The public is however advised to use the fabric/ cloth masks. However, if one has a medical mask, with exception of N95, it has to be worn once and disposed of by burning or throwing in the pit latrine.

17.	The DON'Ts when using masks	• **DO NOT** use or collect medical masks that have been disposed of or thrown away • **DO NOT** share masks even with close family members. • **DO NOT** re-use medical masks • **DO NOT** borrow masks • **DO NOT** buy medical masks from the streets.
18.	What will happen if found NOT wearing a mask?	• You will be denied access to **ANY** public facility if you are not wearing a mask. • Wearing masks in public is now **MANDATORY** in Uganda as per the Presidential Directive following the guidance of the Ministry of Health.

"Wearing a Mask: Dos and Don'ts"

✔ DO: Cover nose and mouth

✔ DO: Pull hair back

✔ DO: Tie straps behind head & neck

✔ DO: Remove by grabbing from the back

✖ DON'T: Pull below the nose

✖ DON'T: Wear on forehead

✖ DON'T: Pull below chin

✖ DON'T: Cross straps

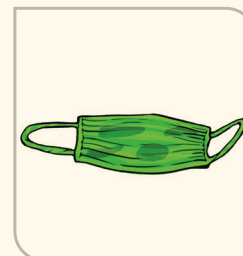✖ DON'T: Leave hair down face

✖ DON'T: Hang from one ear

✖ DON'T: Leave a strap hanging

✖ DON'T: Wear a dirty or wet mask

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#KeepADistance

For more information, call the Ministry of Health toll free line on:
919, 0800 100066, 0800 303033 & 0800203033 or send a **free SMS**
to Ureport on **8500** or WhatsApp on **0770818139**

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