1. Introduction

Description

The mask being distributed is 33 x 28 cm, made of 100% polyester fabrics, with a weight of 146 mg/m². It has two layers and allows for the placement of a filter.

Warning

This fabric mask, sometimes called a ‘citizen mask’, is intended for healthy (or asymptomatic) individuals. It aims to reduce virus transmission by asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic carriers. Two people who each wear a mask and meet unexpectedly in the street or in a large area largely “neutralise” the risk of viral transmission by an “infected person” for the greatest benefit to society! It is therefore bidirectional “MUTUAL PROTECTION”. (Source: Prof. Gala https://cdn.nimbu.io/s/gd6c0r0/assets/1587481404910/FAQ-Masque-2020-04-21.pdf).
Wearing this mask is complementary to frequent hand washing. Its wearer is not exempt from compliance with legally compulsory social distancing rules (https://emploi.belgique.be/sites/default/files/content/news/DistanciationSociale.pdf).

2. UCLouvain rules of use

‘It is necessary to wear a mask covering the mouth and nose whenever another person might be encountered. As a reminder, the use of surgical or FFP2/3 masks is reserved primarily for nursing staff. Wearing a mask is intended to slow the spread of the virus through the air (via respiratory droplets) and prevents infected (including asymptomatic) persons from spreading it to others. Recommendations on the use and maintenance of masks are available on the website’ (Coronavirus - Mesures générales en vigueur au sein de l’UCLouvain arrêtées au 28 avril 2020).
3. Instructions for putting on and taking off a mask

PUTTING ON A MASK

You must be clean before handling the mask:
- wash your hands with soap for at least 40 seconds;
- dry your hands with disposable paper towels;
- without touching its front, put on the mask by handling only the ends of the elastic straps;
- make sure the mask covers the mouth and nose and mask edges are in contact with your face;
- adjust the mask over the bridge of the nose;
- avoid touching face and mask;
- if you happen to touch your face or mask, wash your hands.

AFTER USE or in the event of REPLACEMENT:
- wash your hands;
- remove the mask from behind by handling the elastic straps;
- avoid all contact with mask front;
- place the mask in a closed plastic bag until cleaning;
- again carefully wash your hands with soap and dry them.

4. Use instructions

- The mask has maximum effectiveness if it is worn in direct contact with bare skin:
  - a beard decreases mask adhesion to the skin and thus protection from virus transmission: it is not recommended. Shaved skin is the ideal. Hair should not be placed between the mask and the user's skin);
  - avoid an overly tight, uncomfortable fit;
  - do not let the mask hang below the mouth;
  - do not wear a damp mask and avoid wearing it for more than four hours at a time.

Choice of filter
- paper towel;
- coffee filter;
- vacuum bag cut to fit between mask layers;
- electrostatic cleaning cloth;
- fleece;
- cloth diaper.
5. Washing instructions

The mask is yours alone and must be washed by its wearer:

- throw out the filter;
- machine wash mask with your usual cleaning products for 30 minutes at 60° C (the coronavirus is already very sensitive to 63° C for four minutes); you can also hand wash it at 60°C;
- the mask must dry completely before reuse (wearing a wet mask is more dangerous than not wearing one!);
- insert a new filter.

Additional comments:

- placing masks in a freezer or microwaving them as a supposed means of cleaning guarantees nothing; using an oven is also not recommended given the lack of current knowledge concerning the resistance of this type of mask;
- ironing can complete the mask maintenance procedure but it is not a replacement for washing at 60 ° C for at least 30 minutes;
- never disinfect masks with alcohol or bleach (the poison control centre receives a lot of calls concerning irritation and burning of mucous membranes or eyes following such harmful practices).

Sources: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) ‘Masque Citoyen’ ‘Protection Mutuelle’ open source website
https://www.opensourceagainstcovid19.org/fr/. Practical questions individuals ask concerning the details of making, maintaining, and daily managing a ‘citizen mask’, Jean-Luc Gala (MD, PhD, full prof.):
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