

MASK-MAKING: Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Is it necessary to use the fabrics in the pattern?**

According to the NSW Dept Health guidelines, a non-absorbent fabric, such as polyester or polyurethane is best to be used for the outside layer. Any type of cotton fabric is best for the inside layer, but a crisp weave is easier to sew (eg. homespun or drill or similar). The middle layer should be a blend of each. Check the label in store to confirm fabric type.

Fabric colours: it would be great to use the same, bright Meals on Wheels colours used in our mask pattern, then all our clients and community members will recognize us when we're out in the community. Take your pattern or info sheet with you to the shop to use as a guide.

2. **Which elastic should I use?**

The most comfortable and easiest to sew elastic is narrow, 3mm or 4mm wide. Wider, standard size elastic can hurt people's ears. If there is no narrow elastic available, use hat elastic, and make a knot in each end before sewing it in, so that it won't slip out with use.

3. **Is it necessary to have nose wire?**

Nose wire can be moulded to your nose to create a good seal, which will minimize the risk of airborne contagions being breathed in and being transmitted to the environment. It also stops your glasses fogging up!

4. **Where do I buy plastic-coated garden wire for the nose piece?**

Hardware stores such as Bunnings stock plastic-coated garden wire in packs in the gardening section. They range in price- the cheapest brand is Saxon soft twist tie at \$2 for 5 metres.

5. **How do I cut and seal the wire for the nose piece?**

Use a small pair of wire cutters to cut 8cm lengths of garden wire. Hold the end to a candle flame for two seconds to soften the plastic and use long-nose pliers to gently crimp the ends while the plastic is soft. It will cool so that no wire is visible at the end.

6. **Should I pin the mask together while sewing?**

Many people find it easier to pin and sew while others prefer not to-it's up to you.

7. **Will the material fray? What can I do about it?**

The polyester material won't fray so it can be sewn without finishing the edges. Cotton and cotton blend fabrics will fray at the edges, so if you want your masks to last well, it's best to cut the fabric with pinking shears or finish the edges with zigzag stitch or an overcast.

8. **Where should I send my masks?**

If you love making these masks and have lots to give away, you can help Meals on Wheels volunteers in other areas, by going to nswmealsonwheels.org.au/masks on our website, and filling in the form. We will get in touch and let you know where they can be sent.