

Face masks and coronavirus

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Coronavirus spreads in the form of respiratory droplets expelled into the air when you cough, sneeze or talk. Face masks trap these droplets. Simple masks made from cotton or polyester can be effective, but masks made from three layers are more effective. Medical grade (N95) masks are usually three layers thick and are designed to remove at least 95% of droplets.

N95 masks are made from tiny poly(propene) fibres. These fibres are less than 1×10^{-6} m in diameter and are randomly arranged. They are sometimes given an electrostatic charge which can help them attract charged particles. Some masks even have copper or zinc ions. These are thought to attract viruses through ionic interactions.



N95 medical mask

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1. Why do face masks help prevent coronavirus being passed on?
2. What charge do copper and zinc ions have?
3. Describe how poly(propene) forms from propene.