

# Doing This to Your Mask May Make It Protect You Less, Experts Warn

THIS POPULAR MASK HACK MAY NOT BE A GREAT AS IT SEEMS.



Face masks have become the norm over the last year in order to stay safe from COVID. At first, wearing a mask was foreign to most of us. But as time has gone on, we've all discovered our own favorite masks and hacks to make wearing them easier or more comfortable. Unfortunately, not every mask tip may be entirely safe. According to experts, one accessory you may be using has the potential to make your mask less effective when it comes to protecting you and others. Read on to find out what it is, and for more on the masks to avoid, find out why The CDC Warns Against Using These 6 Face Masks.

People are using mask brackets to keep their mask from touching their skin.



Mask brackets are designed to keep your mask's fabric separate from your face, explains **Spencer Kroll**, MD, a board-certified internal medicine specialist. These brackets are typically either silicone or plastic pieces that sit in between the mask and your face. They are usually used by wearers to prevent skin issues from masks, like mask acne, or to help them feel as if they can breathe easier in their masks.

"I have seen patients complaining of breathing problems, skin reactions, and feelings of claustrophobia while in masks. These feelings decrease mask compliance, as people drop the mask below their nose or wear looser fitting masks or don't wear them at all," Kroll says. "The goal of these accessories is to create more breathing space and less contact with the mask." And for more up-to-date COVID news delivered right to your inbox, sign up for our daily newsletter.

However, adding a bracket could potentially make your mask less effective.



"Mask brackets will make a mask less effective if the mask is no longer flush against your face, fully covering your nose and mouth, because the air would escape around the edges without being filtered," said **Leann Poston**, MD, a licensed physician and health advisor for Invigor Medical.

Because brackets push your mask away from your face, they may create the gaps Poston warns about. While there is no research on mask brackets in particular, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says masks must fit "snugly around the nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face" in order to work effectively. If not, contaminated particles could enter your airspace and infect you or exit your mask and spread the virus to others if you're sick. And for more coronavirus concerns, The Moderna CEO Just Made This Scary Prediction About COVID.

Mask brackets may also exacerbate other issues.



**Gary Goldenberg, MD**, an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, told *Prevention* that you may want to think twice about using mask brackets if you're attempting to protect your skin.

"Silicone and plastic can irritate the skin, especially when in contact for a long time and weather is hot," he explained. Also, even though they reduce direct contact between your mask and your skin, "it's still possible to get breakouts in the area of the support bracket," Goldenberg said. That's why he recommends proper skincare and prescription acne creams as solutions to mask acne over the use of mask brackets. And if you're worried about the virus, know that [These 3 Things Could Prevent Almost All COVID Cases, Study Finds](#).

If you do use mask brackets, they have to be washed regularly.



As long as they don't interfere with how your mask lays against your face and don't produce an unwanted reaction on your skin, Kroll says mask brackets can be safe to use. However, if you are going to use one, it should be washed regularly, just like your mask, Poston warns.

The CDC says your mask should be washed after each use, as dirty masks could make you more vulnerable to COVID. According to Kroll, you should be able to wash your bracket with with soap and water at the same rate, depending on the material. And for more mask tips, [Doing This to Your Mask Could Keep You Even Safer From COVID, Experts Say](#).