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HEALTH & FITNESS · CORONAVIRUS COVERAGE

Where to Buy N95s, KN95s, and Surgical-Style Masks You Can Trust

By [Joanne Chen](#) Updated July 27, 2021



Photo: Sarah Kobos

Although vaccinations are now widely available, recommendations and regulations are continually in flux, and masks will likely

FYI

The FDA has revoked its

remain a part of our lives for some time. And even though medical-style masks were all but impossible to find early on in the pandemic (when most were reserved for front-line workers), they're now much easier to get—and, in some cases, are your best bet for the most-protective face coverings. Still, separating the good options from the bad can be tough. In the past several months, we've tried 35 models and confirmed their filtration claims with government agencies or our own lab testing, performed in collaboration with Colorado State University. Here we recommend legitimate [N95](#), [KN95](#), and [surgical masks](#) you can buy from trusted retailers now.

I've spent months scrolling through scores of masks online, poring over documents from the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) and the FDA, and puzzling over little certification slips half-written in Chinese (a childhood's worth of Saturday morning Chinese school has not helped). I've done this as part of my reporting for Wirecutter's [guide to cloth face masks](#) but also for personal reasons: My husband (a teacher) and child had been attending school in person for most of the academic year that ended in June 2021, and we have older parents we've been trying to keep safe. At this point, we adults are fully vaccinated, and we're eager to spend time with friends, get a haircut, schedule a doctor's visit, and catch up with all the other activities we've missed.

Frustratingly, though, the now-ubiquitous presence of these disposable masks doesn't make [finding the right one](#) any easier, particularly when it comes to KN95 masks (the Chinese equivalent of N95 masks). Yes, there's [the counterfeit issue](#). But also, KN95 and surgical-style masks don't always fit very well. As Loretta Fernandez, an associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Northeastern University in Boston, explained, "There's nothing magical about a KN95. The edges still need to form a good seal against the face for it to be protective." The truth is, [any medical-style mask](#)—no matter how superior the filtration—doesn't do much better than a quality cloth mask if it allows most of the air you're breathing to go around the mask rather than through it. Proper fit is critical.

For this guide, we tracked down legitimate respirators and masks, as well as reliable retailers that sell them. We also tested the masks for fit, comfort, and (for those who want to layer up) compatibility with our cloth-mask picks. Besides consulting five scientists, five manufacturers, three importers, two retailers, an e-commerce expert, and two government agencies, we also tried on 23 respirators and 12 surgical-style masks

[emergency use authorization](#) of non-NIOSH-approved disposable respirators for use by health-care workers in health-care settings.

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The FDA has [revoked its emergency use authorization](#) of non-NIOSH-approved disposable respirators for use by health-care workers in health-care settings.

The agency [currently advises](#) health-care workers to use only FDA-cleared or NIOSH-approved masks, and it suggests that "health care personnel and facilities ... consider redistributing current inventory of non-NIOSH-approved respirators," for use in non-medical settings. We continue to recommend our [KN95 respirator mask picks from Powecom](#), which were once FDA-authorized for emergency use by health-care personnel.

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July 27, 2021



ourselves. See what might work for you, adjust the fit as best you can, and chances are good you'll end up with a mask you can feel confident wearing for the times you need it most.

Kimberly-Clark N95 Pouch Respirator

A NIOSH-approved N95

This odd-looking, oddly comfortable N95 is a NIOSH-approved respirator meant for non-medical use. Its headbands are soft yet help form a tight seal, and its long nose-bridge wire reduces glasses fogging.

**\$58 from Amazon
(pack of 50)**

Despite its weird duckbill shape, the **Kimberly-Clark N95 Pouch Respirator** is the real deal. Its malleable material and soft headbands form a good seal for most faces, and this mask's generous cut allows more air to filter in for easier breathing.

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**Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask
(ear loops)**

A versatile KN95

This easy-on, easy-off KN95 respirator mask has ear loops that stretch well for a wider fit but also knot easily for a snugger one.

**\$10 from Bona Fide Masks
(pack of 10)**

**Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask
(headbands)**

The same mask, with headbands

If you prefer headbands to ear loops, you may find that this ear-friendly respirator mask provides a better fit.

**\$12 from Bona Fide Masks
(pack of 10)**

The **Powecom KN95** design comes in both **ear-loop** and **headband** versions, so you have a greater chance of finding something that feels right. Its rounded (instead of flat) fasteners are easier than most to knot, should you need to adjust the fit. Both versions also come in **black**.

**BYD Care Single-Use Surgical
Mask**

**A stiffer surgical mask best for
layering**

Though its fasteners aren't the easiest to knot, this surgical mask fits comfortably underneath most cloth face masks for easy layering.

**\$13* from Amazon
(pack of 50)**

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$14.

The [BYD Care Single-Use Surgical Mask](#) is the most substantial-feeling surgical mask we've tried, and it's also among the most affordable. We like the reinforced ear loops and the fact that it's FDA-cleared and has demonstrated 98% filtration efficiency for 0.1-micron-diameter particles. Because of its difficult-to-fold borders, it's best used under a well-fitting cloth mask to achieve a leak-free fit.

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Everything we recommend

[Kimberly-Clark N95 Pouch Respirator](#)

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[Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask \(ear loops\)](#)

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[BYD Care Single-Use Surgical Mask](#)

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Though its fasteners aren't the easiest to knot, this surgical mask fits comfortably underneath most

Most medical-style respirators are soft yet help form a tight seal, and its long nose-bridge wire reduces glasses fogging.

Buying Options

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[\(pack of 50\)](#)

Stretch well for a wider fit but also knot easily for a snugger one.

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The research

What is a medical-style mask, and do you need one?

N95 vs. KN95, KF94, FFP2, and surgical masks

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Our favorite surgical-style mask

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More NIOSH-approved, NIOSH-assessed, or FDA-authorized masks worth considering

More masks (that aren't FDA-authorized or NIOSH-approved)

Sources

What is a medical-style mask, and do you need one?

The term “medical-style masks” refers to the types of masks you typically

see in health-care settings. These include respirators, such as those labeled N95 (designed to meet US standards), KN95 (Chinese standards), KF94 (Korean standards), and FFP2 (European standards), as well as surgical-style masks—the pleated variety with ear loops or ties that typically come in boxes of 50 or so. Consisting of high-efficiency filter layers, all of these mask types are designed to protect the wearer in high-risk situations.

(Cloth masks, in contrast, were initially intended to protect *other people* from the wearer, though depending on their materials and design, they can also work the other way around.)

If you're spending time among others indoors, visiting a hospital or clinic, or caring for a COVID-19-positive person (or someone who is vulnerable to a severe case of COVID-19), you may consider wearing either a respirator mask or a surgical-style mask modified to form a better seal or layered under a well-fitting cloth mask. In fact, a [CDC paper](#) reported that securing a surgical mask to the face (by knotting the ear loops and tucking in the sides, as shown in [this video](#), or by adding a [well-fitting cloth face mask](#) over it) can potentially decrease your exposure to possibly infectious tiny airborne droplets called aerosols by about 95%, which is also about how well respirators are expected to perform.

This level of filtration on medical-style masks (assuming they're genuine) is better than what you can get from almost all cloth masks, said Linsey Marr, a professor of engineering at Virginia Tech who is an expert in the science of aerosols. In fact, when Wirecutter commissioned [cloth-mask filtration-efficiency testing](#), filter-less, double-layer cloth masks filtered (at a flow rate similar to what happens with normal talking volume) around 47% of 0.5-micron particles at best. If you're not vaccinated, Marr "highly recommends" bolstering your well-fitting cloth mask, whether it's by wearing a surgical-type mask beneath it or including a good filter inside it. Vaccinated people may choose to do this as well, depending on the circumstances.

N95 vs. KN95, KF94, FFP2, and surgical masks

Constructed with multiple layers of nonwoven fabric, an **N95 respirator** blocks out at least 95% of particles as small as 0.1 micron in diameter. **Surgical N95 respirators** offer the added benefit of also having passed tests for such factors as fluid resistance, biocompatibility, and flammability. All legitimate N95 masks are approved by NIOSH as respirators; surgical N95 models have undergone additional NIOSH testing to meet specific FDA requirements.

N95 masks fasten snugly to your face with two bands that go around the back of your head. As with cloth face masks, some people find bands to be easier to adjust than ear loops—you can play around with knots and positioning to create a good seal. However, an N95's elastics tend to be tighter than those on cloth masks, which some wearers might find suffocating. Some N95 masks, like Wirecutter's [picks for dealing with smoke and dust](#), have valves for easier exhalation, but because they let unfiltered air escape, they are not useful in preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

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Because N95 respirators had been in short supply, the FDA had issued emergency use authorizations (EUAs) earlier in the pandemic for internationally sourced, non-NIOSH-approved respirators, such as KN95, KF94, and FFP2 models, to be sold in the United States if they met certain criteria. These authorizations were intended for purchases of masks to be used by health-care personnel in health-care settings. Now that NIOSH-approved masks are more widely available, the [FDA has revoked its EUA \(PDF\)](#). The agency now recommends that health-care workers use NIOSH-approved N95s. As for the rest of us, the previously authorized masks are still adequate. The [FDA suggests](#) that “health care personnel and facilities ... consider redistributing current inventory of non-NIOSH-approved respirators,” for use in non-medical settings.

KN95 masks (China’s N95 equivalent) should block out 95% of 0.3-micron particles; **KF94** and **FFP2**, 94%. All are made with similar layers of high-filtration nonwoven materials.

Unlike N95 masks, these other respirator masks typically have ear loops instead of headbands. People often encounter good filtration but a bad fit when shopping for a KN95. The same goes for N95 masks that aren’t customized (as they typically would be in a hospital setting). A January 2021 [PLOS One article](#) on mask-fit issues reported that a KN95 was a poor fit for all seven study participants, while the five N95 masks in the experiment did little better—failing to fit four out of seven subjects. Even a bit of extra fat in the chin or a few millimeters in the width of the nose can have an impact on a respirator’s fit, the authors noted.

Northeastern’s Loretta Fernandez found that a poorly fitting KN95 may block 0.3-micron particles only as effectively as a poorly fitting surgical mask—at around 72% efficiency instead of the promised 95% plus. This level of performance may be problematic for people working in the ICU but perhaps less so for someone doing a quick run to the post office. Still, from an economic standpoint, it’s pointless to spend the extra money on a KN95 only to have it work as effectively as a much cheaper mask. Fernandez, who

has been [assessing masks \(PDF\)](#) since the start of the pandemic, noted an easy fix a dentist shared with her: By cutting the ear loops on a KN95 mask and reattaching them to form headbands, the dentist was able to achieve a secure enough fit to nudge the filtration back up past 90%.

“Generally speaking, if you’re fogging up your glasses, it’s not a perfect seal.” —Hana Alkhaled, George Washington University

Surgical masks are medical devices regulated by the FDA. These masks are designed to prevent fluid from penetrating the mask (from, say, splattering as a result of a medical procedure) and potentially harming the wearer. Because they don't fit close to the face, they're not designed to protect the wearer from inhaling small, potentially infectious particles. Nevertheless, in order to gain FDA clearance, either through [510\(k\)](#) or the agency's previous [emergency use authorization](#) (now revoked, since the supply of NIOSH-approved N95 masks for health-care workers has been replenished), surgical masks undergo testing to meet voluntary consensus standards set by ASTM International (formerly the American Society for Testing and Materials)—and part of those standards include achieving a level of filtration efficiency. Level 1 indicates that the mask blocks out 95% of particles at 0.1 to 5 microns in diameter at certain flow rates following another set of challenges. Levels 2 and 3 indicate at least 98% for the same particle size range.

Medical-grade masks should be fluid resistant and should keep their shape in the rain better than most cloth masks. Regardless of which type of mask you manage to get your hands on, however, you won't come anywhere close to the stated filtration values in real life unless you secure a perfect seal to your face around the entire perimeter of the mask. "Generally speaking, if you're fogging up your glasses, it's not a perfect seal," said Hana Akselrod, assistant professor of medicine in the division of infectious diseases at George Washington University School of Medicine. (If you don't wear glasses, take a big exhale with your mask on—if you feel a puff of air on your skin near the edges of the mask, you need a tighter fit.)

Our favorite respirator masks

We set out to identify and find authentic disposable respirator masks, from reputable sellers, that are reasonably priced and well built. We're continuing to test these masks for fit and comfort on a diverse range of faces and will be trying other options as they become available. We're [continuing to test](#) these masks for fit and comfort, and we will be trying other options as they become available.

Kimberly-Clark N95 Pouch Respirator



Photo: Sarah Kobos

Photo: Sarah Kobos



Kimberly-Clark N95 Pouch Respirator

A NIOSH-approved N95

This odd-looking, oddly comfortable N95 is a NIOSH-approved respirator meant for non-medical use. Its headbands are soft yet help form a tight seal, and its long nose-bridge wire reduces glasses fogging.

\$58 from Amazon
(pack of 50)

What we like: This duckbill-shaped mask is a NIOSH-approved N95 respirator manufactured in the US. It's also our favorite because it's the only one of its type that actually fit us well, and it felt surprisingly comfortable. Thanks to its soft, flexible construction, the Kimberly-Clark N95 Pouch Respirator should fit most people. Kimberly-Clark is an established manufacturer of diapers, tampons, and other personal-care products that humans use against their bodies, and now the company has leveraged that technology into expanded mask offerings (before the pandemic, Kimberly-Clark's manufacturing employees had used this mask in-house). Because it's a non-medical respirator, this mask is not tested to protect you from potential splatter of bodily fluids.

Soft headbands that easily knot and stretch over various positions on the head form a good seal and are plenty comfortable for long-term wear. A more cavernous cut (about an inch wider on each side compared with the typical respirator) means more filtered air to breathe in. And in our experience, a long, sturdy nose-bridge wire helped minimize glasses fogging, too. I was able to place the lower band higher on my head to prevent air from escaping around my chin (a pain point for me with other respirators). This mask doesn't feel the easiest to breathe through—but that suggests some degree of filtration efficiency. ("I'm always suspicious of masks that have little or no breathing resistance to them," Christian L'Orange, the assistant research professor of mechanical engineering who ran our cloth-mask filtration test at Colorado State University, told us.) The Kimberly-Clark mask closes absolutely flat (without the need for you to pinch the nose wire closed, as you have to with many other foldable masks), and at around \$1 a mask, it's also the least expensive NIOSH-approved N95 we've seen so far.

What we don't like: This mask looks ridiculous, particularly compared with sleek cloth ones. "Our initial focus was offering performance and comfort over form," said Rob Hughes, vice president of PPE at Kimberly-Clark

Professional. He added that the company is currently evaluating additional designs. This mask is truly for one-time use: With too much wear and tear or rough usage, the bands can rip, and the nose-bridge wire on top can become unstuck.

Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask



Photo: Sarah Kobos

Photo: Sarah Kobos



**Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask
(ear loops)**

A versatile KN95

This easy-on, easy-off KN95 respirator mask has ear loops that stretch well for a wider fit but also knot easily for a snugger one.

**\$10 from Bona Fide Masks
(pack of 10)**

Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask

**Powecom KN95 Respirator Mask
(headbands)**

The same mask, with headbands

If you prefer headbands to ear loops, you may find that this ear-friendly respirator mask provides a better fit.

**\$12 from Bona Fide Masks
(pack of 10)**

What we like: This FDA-authorized KN95 mask offers quite a bit of variety—you can choose from ear loops or headbands, and black or white. We bought Powecom masks directly from the importer and distributor, through Bona Fide Masks. It's a legit site that's part of Ball Chain Manufacturing, the largest manufacturer of ball-chain-related products in the world—you know, the strings of metallic beads that keep keys together, switch lamps on and off, and hold military dog tags. Thanks to its ball-chain business, the company already had reliable sources in China, who helped it get in touch with a reliable mask maker, Guangzhou Powecom.

Powecom has been around since 2009 and is a recognizable name in China for making masks, even before the pandemic. Its KN95 was listed under the FDA's now-revoked emergency use authorizations Appendix A for non-NIOSH-approved respirators manufactured in China. Even though they're no longer recommended for health-care workers because the supply of N95s has been replenished, they are still helpful for the rest of us. We like that the mask's fasteners are sturdily attached (more so than most) and that they knot easily for adjustment. They're also slightly rounded, as opposed to flat, so they're somewhat gentler on the ears. We also like that you can choose to buy as few as 10 masks in a pack (though you can order as many as 10,000). The dimensions are neither too large nor too small for most of our testers, and yet it also accommodated one who has a beard (though, of course, facial hair inherently lessens the seal).

What we don't like: As with just about all the KN95 masks we've tried, it's

difficult to achieve a good fit with the ear loops version of this mask. Without cord locks and malleable fabric, respirators just aren't as adjustable. Tying the ear loops helped block the air from escaping at my chin, but it somehow increased the fog on my glasses. In contrast, the headbands provide a snugger fit. One tester found that the headband version of this mask was too tight for comfort (and strongly preferred the ear loops version).

Our favorite surgical-style mask

Surgical masks are less expensive and less thick than N95 designs and other respirators, but because they tend to gape at the sides, they require some adjustments for optimal protection. As the [CDC recommends](#), you can knot the ear loops and tuck the sides (this [New York Times video](#) shows you how) or add an adjustable cloth face mask (like one of [our picks](#)) on top. You can also do both. We've tried 12 surgical-style masks over the past few months, and for the most part, the differences are barely discernible. The [BYD Care Single-Use Surgical Mask](#) is our favorite because, more than other masks we've seen, it is a good value. Read on for [more surgical mask options](#).

BYD Care Single-Use Surgical Mask



Photo: Sarah Kobos

Photo: Sarah Kobos



BYD Care Single-Use Surgical Mask

A stiffer surgical mask best for layering

Though its fasteners aren't the easiest to knot, this surgical mask fits comfortably underneath most cloth face masks for easy layering.

**\$13* from Amazon
(pack of 50)**

*At the time of publishing, the price was \$14.

What we like: Most of the masks we tested feel more or less the same, but the **BYD Care Single-Use Surgical Mask** is noticeably sturdier, with a distinctive border and reinforced ear loops. Those loops are more structured and wide-set than most, so this mask might work well for people who have been frustrated by fasteners that don't stretch as far as they need. As the name implies, this model is an actual surgical mask that is cleared by the FDA and meets ASTM Level 2 standards (so, when sealed to the face, it filters out at least 98% of 0.1-micron particles). BYD Care also makes an **ASTM Level 3 version** of this mask, which we haven't tried.

BYD Care also sells a **3-Ply Single-Use Face Mask in black**. The materials listed are the same as those of the blue-and-white Single-Use Surgical Mask. But the 3-Ply Single-Use hasn't undergone FDA clearance, and the brand makes no filtration claims on its packaging. The top layer of this mask feels slightly less soft, but more sturdy.

What we don't like: It's tough to form a good seal by knotting the loops and tucking in the sides—the loops, attached to the underside, are more difficult to knot than those on the Winner Medical masks, and the perimeter is a bit rigid. So you'll probably have to wear a well-secured cloth mask on top to create a good seal. BYD (which stands for Build Your Dreams) is an electric-vehicle and electronics company that jumped into the mask business last January in the thick of the pandemic in Wuhan, China—it's not a longtime medical supply company, and that gave us pause. But BYD has

leveraged its engineering capabilities to create a range of masks that look and feel noticeably more solid than most. At first supplying only to government agencies (including in the state of California), the company now also sells to regular shoppers through Office Depot and Amazon.

How we picked and tested

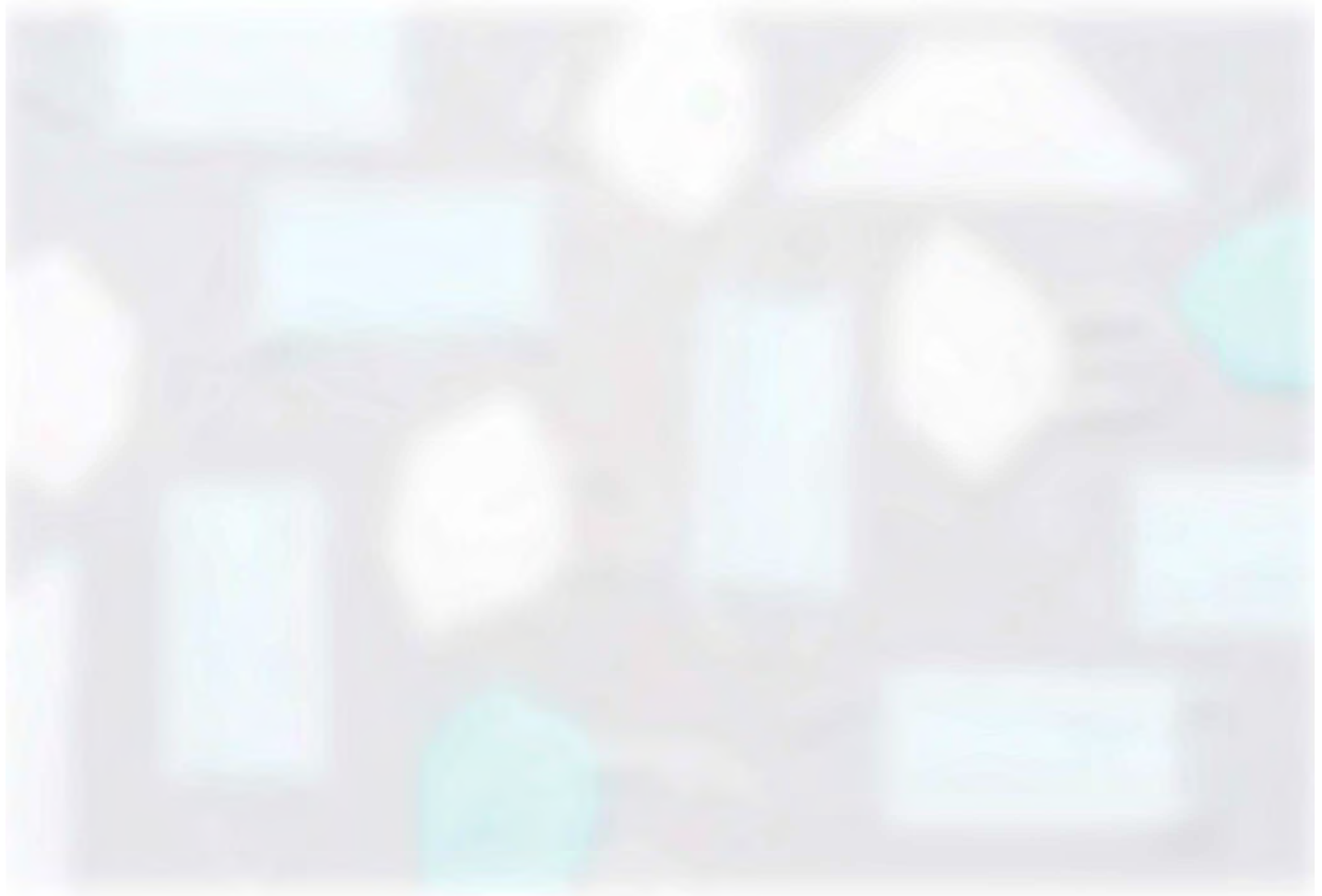


Photo: Sarah Kobos

Searching for a reliable respirator or surgical-style mask for a decent price during a pandemic has been the most difficult shopping experience I've ever had. It's like trying to find the last Lego Star Wars advent calendar three weeks before Christmas—but infinitely worse. Aside from navigating retailers that have long sold out or are price-gouging, you're also contending with fraudulent sellers, fraudulent products, or both: The CDC reports that about 60% of KN95 masks sold in the US are fake. What's more, there are sizing issues. Oh, and whatever you buy is typically

nonrefundable.

As for disposable pleated masks, every neighborhood store and online vendor seems to sell them these days, but not all of them are actually surgical masks—just surgical-style, which is why they’re often a third or half the price of actual authorized surgical masks. The packaging on most simply says “face mask,” in which case you can’t expect the masks to filter like the kinds of masks that health-care workers wear in hospitals. In fact, Colorado State University’s L’Orange—who has tested thousands of masks, including [our picks](#)—told us the most egregious fails have come from surgical-style masks as opposed to respirators. Some have exhibited a mere 20% filtration rate on small particles, though most of them have demonstrated a slightly less shocking 70% to 80%. Others have appeared to be missing layers altogether, he said. One way to detect a fake is to hold it top side up under a dripping faucet: If the droplets soak in instead of completely beading up, it’s not a real surgical mask, which by default has some level of water resistance.

The CDC reports that about 60% of KN95 masks sold in the US are fake.

We decided to start out with retailers we trust, including Costco, CVS, and Office Depot. We also perused business-news articles online about US-based companies that are manufacturing or selling masks, or both. Virginia Tech’s Linsey Marr suggested buying directly from a reputable supplier whenever possible, not just whatever you find from a third-party seller (the fewer middlemen, the smaller the chance of mischief). So we checked out each company’s e-commerce sites and confirmed that each respirator or surgical mask of interest is included in one of the following:

- NIOSH’s [list of approved N95 respirators](#).
- The FDA’s [Personal Protective Equipment EUAs](#) (emergency use authorizations) Appendix A list of surgical masks and foreign respirator manufacturers (which indicates the manufacturer submitted test reports demonstrating that the product met certain performance standards, including filtration efficiency, and the FDA recognized it). Although health-care workers are now advised to once again use only NIOSH-approved designs, these masks are still helpful in everyday settings.
- The FDA’s database of devices that have received [510\(k\) clearance](#).
- [NIOSH’s International Respirator Assessments](#) (with good results), which test US-sold, foreign-made respirators only (these tests aren’t the

same as NIOSH approval, but they do give mask buyers a sense of the quality of the materials used).

The “same” mask sold by the same company can differ depending on the retailer.

Sometimes cross-checking wasn't possible until we received the masks and found the product qualification certificate—the small slip of paper in the packaging that includes the details about the product and its manufacturer, which is usually half written in the language of the country the mask comes from. We also reached out to some of the manufacturers or the sellers to understand the vetting or manufacturing process, especially if we couldn't find the manufacturing company on any of the above lists.

For masks sold on Amazon, we confirmed with the manufacturer that we had a legit link to the product it was selling, and if we couldn't reach the manufacturer (and if the mask was sold out everywhere except Amazon), we checked that the mask was both sold and shipped directly by Amazon. Although this factor limits your choices perhaps unnecessarily, as Kathy Cummins, head of marketing and analytics at [Hinge Global](#), pointed out, we like the assurance that a specific inventory of the product has been vetted by Amazon itself, and we appreciate that shipping by Amazon cuts out the middleman and ensures prompt delivery. A caveat: The “same” mask sold by the same company can differ depending on the retailer. For instance, masks manufactured by the Chinese company [Winner Medical](#) that we bought on Amazon consisted of thinner, less soft mask material than we found on other Winner Medical masks despite their having the same product name (“Medical Face Mask”), standard certification (ASTM Level 1), and materials listed (“non-woven 66 percent; melt blown, 34 percent”) on the certification slips. Winner Medical confirmed to us that it designs masks specifically according to a client's specifications while still ensuring the same protective effects.

Once we tracked down several masks that we concluded were actually medical-grade, our job had only just begun. We also needed to assess each mask in terms of fit and comfort—something far too individual for anyone to judge in a general sense. Still, we're doing our best by distributing masks to a diverse group of nine panelists (two of whom are my husband and me).

When we've come across masks that fit and feel great, but that aren't NIOSH-approved or FDA-cleared, we've sent samples to Colorado State University's [Center for Energy Development and Health](#) for [filtration efficiency and breathability testing](#)

~~efficiency and breathability testing.~~

As with our [guide to cloth face masks](#), we'll continue to add to this list of trusted respirator and surgical-style masks as new and better options become available. Stay tuned for future updates.

Other medical-style masks we like

These masks stood out from the rest of the competition because of the positive response we received from a relatively broad swath of panelists, and their high performance in our filtration-efficiency testing. However, they aren't as affordable as our current picks—depending on your needs, you may find them worth the extra expense.

4CAir AireTrust Nano Mask



Photo: Sarah Kobos

Photo: Sarah Kobos



The [4CAir AireTrust Nano Mask](#) is among the thinnest KN95-type masks we've tried, thanks to its patented nanotechnology. Less like padding and more like paper, the mask feels light on the face and offers arguably better breathability. One panelist wore it to pilates: "My face didn't sweat underneath it because it's so light," they said. "After two minutes, I forgot it was there." Because this mask hasn't yet undergone FDA clearance, we did our own filtration testing in collaboration with researchers at Colorado State, and confirmed that, as advertised, it has filtration efficiency of 99% for particles as small as 0.5 micron. Respirators more often than not come in one size, so we like that this one comes in three: [small \(for kids\)](#), [medium](#), and [large](#); the small size even has cord stoppers in the ear loops. All of our panelists found a size that fit them well, though some were more snug around the nose (hence no glasses fog) than at the chin. We would make this a pick except that, at more than \$3 apiece, it's much pricier than our picks, the [Powecom](#) (75¢ a mask) and [Kimberly-Clark](#) (about \$1 a mask). But we'd splurge on a five-pack for \$17.50 for the infrequent situations where we might especially appreciate a mask that's lighter than most, such as a lengthy flight or a long doctor's visit.

Kyungin Flax KF94





Photo: Sarah Kobos

Photo: Sarah Kobos



Because of KF94 masks' more structured "boat" shape (a horizontal rectangle that tents up to secure itself over the nose bridge and chin), they're somewhat harder to adjust, and different panelists had different opinions on which fit best. But if you'd like to try one, the [Kyungin Flax KF94](#) may be a good option. Like most KF94s, which didn't arrive in the US market until later in the pandemic, Kyungin Flax hasn't undergone the process for NIOSH approval or FDA clearance. So, in collaboration with Colorado State, we filtration-tested the mask ourselves—and found it to block 99% of particles as small as 0.5 micron.

Overall, most KF94s feel thinner than the N95s and KN95s we tried (except for the [Kimberly Clark mask we recommend](#) and the 4CAireTrust Nano Mask we also like). And their boat-like shapes provide arguably more-reliable clearance over the nose and mouth. The Kyungin Flax is no different. We also like that, at about \$24 for a pack of 20, it's around a third to one-half of the price of many others we've seen. However, this mask comes only in one size, making it harder to achieve a solid seal for some of our panelists. If you prefer a KF94 mask and have a narrower chin or smaller face, you might have better luck with masks from [Dr. Puri, Blue Mask, or Etiqa](#).

More NIOSH-approved, NIOSH-assessed, or FDA-authorized masks worth considering

The masks in this section have either undergone the stringent NIOSH testing required to earn an official N95 designation, or submitted the necessary testing results and paperwork for FDA clearance, whether it was via a now-revoked emergency use authorization or the 510(k) process.

Folded flat, most cone-shaped respirator masks—like the [Powecom KN95](#)—measure about 6 inches vertically, unless otherwise noted. And yet each fits

differently, depending on how it's angled around the nose and chin, how pliable the material is, and whether the fasteners are ear loops or headbands.

Respirator masks

In our experience, the **BYD Care KN95** sealed well, thanks to its more easily adjustable headband fasteners, but the nose-bridge wire could slide down the nose and block the airway a bit. This may not be the case for people with higher nose bridges, though—so, as mentioned, we'll continue evaluating this mask with a diverse panel of testers and update this guide accordingly. The fasteners have ridges, which improve grip. This KN95 had been listed under the FDA's now-revoked emergency use authorization [Appendix A](#).

BYD Care's [NIOSH-approved non-medical N95, sold at Office Depot](#), is no longer flagged as "reserved for healthcare workers and first responders," and, as of this writing, a box of 20 is now available for \$30. Compared with the brand's KN95, this mask has shorter fasteners, which make for a more snug fit, and a somewhat stouter profile, allowing for more room above the nose and mouth. However, one tester described it as "actually painful to wear," though that's also the reason why she "trusts" it for doctor's appointments at a hospital. (Pre-vaccination, my husband, wore the N95 to the New York City public school where he's been teaching in person; he arrived home to find "reassuring" imprints on his face. Not everyone feels the same way about ultra-snug fits.)

Florida-based wound-care company [DemeTech](#) launched its respirator production early on in the pandemic. (The company also expanded its production of ASTM Level 3 [surgical masks](#), which come in both [ear-loop](#) and [tie](#) versions; we haven't yet tried those.) We like that the [NIOSH-approved](#) DemeTech respirators come in two designs ([cup](#) and [foldable](#)) and each in "regular" or "small" size. With their sturdy, ridged headbands, you can play with the positioning of these respirator masks for a better fit. My husband and I tried the regular-size foldable masks, and they stood up slightly less high off our faces, especially near the nose, compared with other masks we tried. But they formed a decent seal and, as other panelists noted, also felt lighter. At \$75 for a box of 20, they're as pricey as another lightweight respirator we tried, the [4CAir AireTrust Nano Mask](#), which can be bought more affordably in smaller quantities.

Measuring just 5 inches vertically from top to bottom, the Korean-made and [NIOSH-approved Dobu Mask 500 N95](#) is likely best for people with smaller faces (it barely covered my husband's mouth, and others on our panel equated it to wearing a bra cup or hamburger bun on their face). It fit two

panelists perfectly, though. A bracket keeps the fabric off the face. And a ring of soft, cotton-tee-like material surrounds the nose and mouth, while somehow creating a comfortable seal without a nose-wire bridge. Plastic adjusters on each side easily help tighten the ridged headbands. You can press this mask in half, but, because of the bracket, it doesn't stay folded like the others on this list. It's also somewhat thicker overall. We've confirmed that the mask, available on Amazon (marked "sold and shipped by Dobu Mask"), is legitimate. As expected, the extra hardware makes for a more expensive mask (10 for \$40) than most we've considered.

The much cheaper (25 for \$45), foldable NIOSH-approved Dobu Mask 201 N95 fits snug like the BYD Care N95, but with slightly less clearance over the nose and mouth, and arguably a more gentle touch. Unlike the BYD Care N95, "They don't dig into my eyes," said one panelist. If you go through N95s on a regular basis (like my husband, who wears one to teach in-person classes everyday), the Dobu masks get pricey (at the time of this writing, they're \$45 for a pack of 25 on Amazon). For a more affordable, similarly shaped option, consider the Powecom KN95 (sold in a headband option at about \$1 per mask). Its elastics feel a bit looser but still create a secure—and arguably more comfortable—seal, according to our panelists.

The Dr. Puri Micro-Dust Protection Mask isn't NIOSH-approved, but a June 2020 filtration-test run by NIOSH on samples sent to the agency reported that they blocked more than 99% of 0.3-micron-size particles. It fit most of our panelists, though some testers thought it sat too close to the mouth, despite its rectangular boat shape, typical of KF94s. Some testers said the masks smelled funny ("dusty," described one panelist); we'd take these masks out of the packaging and let them air out before wearing. We confirmed that the mask sold via this Amazon link (labeled "sold by Dr. Puri Official") is legitimate, at a slightly lower price than we've seen elsewhere.

FLTR sells the NIOSH-approved Chinese-manufactured N95 Round Respirator, which we haven't tried. Given that it's sold only in bulk (100 masks for \$320), we thought it was cost-prohibitive for people who'd like to make sure their mask fits before going all-in.

The Harley Commodity N95 Particulate Respirator, also sold at Bona Fide Masks, may be a better fit than most for people with larger faces. It measures about a quarter-inch greater vertically, from tip to tip, compared with the 6-inch Powecom KN95—so it hits the corner of my eyes. I can breathe better in it, though, since the nose portion (complete with a nose pad) has a less-steep slope. If it's the right size for you, you'll probably get a decent seal with ridged, sturdily affixed, elastic headbands. It's NIOSH-

approved (see Guangzhou Harley).

The **United States Mask Particulate Respirator N95** is manufactured domestically and NIOSH-approved. Similar in size vertically to the Harley Commodity mask (about 6¼ inches), it hits my lower eyelids. The around-the-head bands are easy to knot for a good seal, assuming the mask fits your face. It also costs less (around \$45 for 20 masks) than most other bifold-style N95s, which typically run about \$3.50 or more per mask.

The **Honeywell DF300 N95 Particulate Disposable Respirator** is similar to the BYD KN95: It, too, offers a snugger fit for small faces than the Harley Commodity and United States Mask masks. A piece of foam cushions its sturdy, pliable nose-bridge wire. It's a bit pricier than our picks but cheaper than most others on this list. It's also NIOSH-approved.

The **Makrite 910** is a duckbill-shaped N95 like the Kimberly-Clark mask we recommend, but it is not nearly as comfortable. The thick material proved much less breathable, and the headbands look and feel like thick, albeit smooth, rubber bands. The nose-bridge wire is cushioned by a foam strip, however, and this model is NIOSH-approved. You can play around with the bands for a better seal, but overall we found this mask to be quite restrictive and suffocating.

We were quite excited about the NIOSH-approved RespoKare N95 Respirator Mask's pretty blue color and comfortable nose-bridge cushion, but some panelists found that the ear straps snap off easily. The large size was too large for many panelists (it might be good if you've found that most masks are too small for you), and the medium was much smaller (and, in fact, too small for me). These masks have a strong vinegary smell out of the package, and they cost considerably more than our picks.

The **WellBefore N95-V1 Medical Respirator**, manufactured by Shandong Haidike Medical Products Co., Ltd., is not actually an N95 (a mask is technically not an N95 until NIOSH says it is). Rather, it's a KN95 that had been listed under Appendix A of the FDA's now-revoked EUA for non-NIOSH-approved respirators from China. It has headbands and cord

stoppers for easy adjustment. On my husband and me, it tucks under the chin surprisingly well and hovers stably above the nose without slippage, offering a good seal; others thought that, like the brand's KN95, it runs too large. There's an ear-loop version (which is consistently sold out), but we suspect it won't adjust as easily. Overall, we resent the confusing labeling, and we also think \$3 per mask is a bit pricey for a KN95.

Surgical-style masks

The version of [Winner Medical's Medical Face Mask that we bought from CVS](#) had a cotton-like underlayer that felt soft against the skin. By contrast, the version of [Winner Medical's Medical Face Mask that we bought from Amazon](#)—with a description similar to those in the box from CVS—was flimsy and lacking the soft underlayer. We contacted Winner Medical, a manufacturer based in China, about the discrepancy, and the company explained that it designs masks according to a customer's specifications while maintaining the same protective effects. (CVS also confirmed that it worked with Winner Medical to agree on the designs it has carried.) Winner Medical has been producing masks for about 20 years. All of its Medical Face Mask models are [FDA 510\(k\) cleared](#) and meet ASTM Level 1 standards, meaning they're able to filter out at least 95% of 0.1-micron particles—plenty efficient for a quick errand about town. (As of this writing, it is out of stock on the CVS site but available in some stores.)

More masks (that aren't FDA-authorized or NIOSH-approved)

Just because a mask isn't cleared by these agencies doesn't necessarily mean it performs poorly, though it's hard to know for sure. FDA clearance and NIOSH approval can take many months and can cost a good amount of money—some companies decide not to bother; others have submitted the paperwork but are still awaiting a decision.

Respirator masks

As with many K94s we tried, the [Blue KF94 3D mask](#) fit some of our panel testers well but left gaps for others. Our panelists agreed, however, that it felt lightweight. According to its packaging and authorized seller [BeHealthyUSA.net](#) (a longtime trusted source for Korean imports), it's Korean Ministry of Food and Safety–approved. For confirmation, we reached out to the makers of Blue masks, as well as to the Korean Ministry of Food and Safety, but we didn't receive responses. We didn't send the Blue mask out to Colorado State for filtration-efficiency testing because, besides lacking broad fit appeal, it costs more than the [Dr. Puri](#) and [Kyungin Flax](#) KN94 masks we preferred—and it is considerably more expensive than our picks.

The [Etiga Airway Round Mask](#) is neither FDA-cleared nor NIOSH-approved. But, according to its packaging and seller [BeHealthyUSA.net](#), it has been approved by the Korean Ministry of Food and Safety. (The colorful variants have not undergone the Korean Ministry of Food and Safety approval

process, though the materials are similar.) We didn't include this mask for filtration testing, nor did we investigate it further because too many panelists complained of fit issues (it doesn't grasp the chin very well). And many noted that it has a strong scent out of the package that doesn't fade quickly. At more than \$3 a mask, it's a relatively expensive option for everyday wear.

The sellers of the [FLTR95 Sealing Face Mask—available at Costco in a pack of 100](#) or at [Best Buy in pouches of 10](#)—provided us lab documentation from a third-party lab demonstrating similar filtration results to KN95s. However, it blocked out the mask manufacturer's name, citing proprietary information (and the manufacturer's name wasn't translated on the certification slip, as it typically is and has been for nearly every other mask we've tested). These masks, which come in white or black, have a similar shape (measuring 6 inches vertically, tip to tip) and elastic to that of the [Powecom KN95](#). But they are a tad longer horizontally and come only in an ear-loop option.

The [SupplyAid KN95 Protective Face Mask \(5-Pack\)](#) is not FDA-cleared. But we noticed that a packet we ordered from Amazon was manufactured by Suzhou Letian Protective Products Co., similar to a packet [filtration-tested by NIOSH](#). This assessment found that the masks blocked out particles to an extent similar to N95s. (However, this is just one set of criteria respirators must pass to be a NIOSH-approved N95, and it's indicative only of the specific packets tested.) We ordered another set of SupplyAid masks and found them to be made by the same manufacturer. But packets ordered from Home Depot were made by another manufacturer, whose batch was not NIOSH-tested. We reached out multiple times to SnowJoe, SupplyAid's outdoor-equipment parent company, for clarification but haven't heard back. So we don't know for sure whether the version we bought on Amazon will continue to be manufactured by Suzhou Letian.

Surgical-style masks

[Armbrust Surgical Masks](#) aren't FDA-authorized, but the CEO tells us that the company has been undergoing the process for the past few months. A third-party lab report (which suggests the mask meets ASTM Level 3 filtration standards) is [listed on the Armbrust site](#). Armbrust offers a fun range of color options typically not seen in masks, such as denim, orange, and green. It feels a tad softer and thinner than most of the surgical-style masks we've tried. The nose-bridge wire feels sturdier. And the fasteners knot easily for a good fit. It's about twice the price of our surgical-style mask pick from [BYD Care](#), but it's frequently on sale and a good option if the [BYD](#) and [CVS Winner Medical](#) masks are out of stock.

At around \$10 for 50 masks, the [FLTR General Use Face Mask](#) is among the least-expensive surgical-style masks we've seen. However, they're not FDA-cleared. As with the company's KN95-style masks, these pleated masks have been tested by a third-party lab and found to meet ASTM Level 1 standards (blocking out at least 95% of 0.1-micron particles). The company redacted the manufacturer's name in the paperwork, again for "proprietary" reasons. (This mask is currently out of stock, though you can buy it as part of a [bundle](#) along with a box of black masks.)

Unilever sells its [Lifebuoy Face Mask](#) at Target. A company spokesperson told us that third-party lab testing has shown this mask meets ASTM Level 1 filtration standards (95%), but the company doesn't share results. At about \$30 for 50 masks, this is among the most expensive we've seen for a non-FDA-cleared box of masks.

Sources

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2. Kathy Cummins, [head of marketing and overseer of research and data analytics, Hinge Global](#), phone interview, February 24, 2021
3. Loretta Fernandez, PhD, [associate professor of civil and environmental engineering at Northeastern University](#), phone interview, February 23, 2021
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8. Kristen Picard, [product marketing director, Honeywell](#), phone interview, February 11, 2021
9. Chris Plotz, [director of education and technical affairs, INDA \(Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry\)](#), phone interview, March 2, 2021
10. Nura Sadeghpour, [health communications specialist, CDC/NIOSH](#), email interview, February 24, 2021
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About your guide



Joanne Chen



Joanne Chen is Wirecutter's senior staff writer reporting on sleep and, on occasion, other lifestyle topics. Previously, she covered health and wellness as a magazine editor. After an assignment forced her to sleep eight hours a day for a month, she realized that she is, in fact, a smarter, nicer person when she isn't sleep-deprived.

Further reading



The Best Respirator Mask for Smoke and Dust

Our recommendations for respirators address wildfire smoke, dust, and other environmental air-quality problems.



The Best Cloth and Disposable Masks for Kids and Toddlers

The best mask for kids is the one they'll put on and keep on. We have



six to recommend that are comfortable, breathable, and fit a range of ages.



Wirecutter's 100 Most Popular Picks in March 2021

Of everything we've written about, these were the hundred most-purchased Wirecutter picks last month.



How to Choose the Best Cloth Face Mask for You

The "best" cloth face mask is the one you will wear (and not fuss with). Here's how to find a mask that fits, filters well, and is reasonably comfortable.

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Wendy Darling · 8 hours ago · edited "In our experience, the BYD Care KN95 sealed well, thanks to its more easily adjustable headband fasteners"

This mask has ear loops, not headbands. ^ | v · Reply · Share >

Wendy Darling · 9 hours ago · edited Can't find a Winner Medical mask on the CVS site. But at Amazon it's currently \$1.99 for 50! Seems suspicious. Also doesn't mention being FDA cleared. I'd think they'd use that as a selling point.

^ | v · Reply · Share >

yippeee1999 · 15 hours ago Yawn. (7/28/2021)

^ | v · Reply · Share >

Steph55110 · 17 hours ago What concerns me about all of these masks is that people think they can wear the same mask over and over again...if they are not thrown out after a single use they carry germs...and are

as dangerous as not wearing a mask at all.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Blake Lawless · 4 months ago

— | 🗨

Armbrust has the best surgical masks out right now. They are made in the USA, soft, breathable, have demonstrated high levels of filtration, come in variety of colors, and have ASTM Level 3 Certification. They even sell child sized masks out of the same materials.

The fact that the Wirecutter didn't even consider Armbrust is absurd.

For what it's worth, Armbrust also routinely has sales if you subscribe to their email chain. The current one is 50% off masks with the coupon SPRING-SURGE

^ | v · Reply · Share >



tranquility · 4 months ago · edited

— | 🗨

This has just confused me more and I have been very diligent on learning about masks for a year now. I already had a good N95 familiarity from the post 9/11 anthrax powder attacks on US mail and as a general dust mask for sanding.

Instead of "best" this review should just have top picks (however many that is) and then define each weakness and strengths. Also, the masks to totally avoid.

People have no idea how hot N95s can get! I found the Home Depot SupplyAid KN95 non medical to be even hotter.

Summer is coming. A better option June to October maybe be any good or level 3 surgical with a cloth over it. Especially after you are vaccinated.

Meanwhile, NIOSH really needed to have been faster at coming up with a better rating system so regular people can look at a product and see instantly. Is this a mask for viral matter, sanding your headlights, or a fashion statement? I think a rating system is due, this summer...

BTW: Don't forget to cut the cords on the mask **before** placing it in the trash.

A local stream cleaning group pulls hundreds of the surgical masks out of local streams all the time. (At the start of the pandemic, also many rubber gloves.)

Mostly from parking lot drains into the head waters of streams that lead to rivers that lead to a bay and out to sea.

It is sickening!

^ | v · Reply · Share >



tranquility → tranquility · a day ago · edited

— | 🗨

Since Wirecutter does not allow editing past a certain point, I need to addendum my comment.

- Obviously, with the emergence of the more highly contagious delta variant, the use of surgical and flimsy cloth masks is now not as good an idea from mid July 2021 onward. The supply and production of N95 masks is good now. No need to panic and buy a bunch. I would think of them like paper towels. You do not need two years supply of them.

A three layer cloth mask that is **tight fitting**, with the center layer being a melt blown piece inserted and trashed when you wash the mask, can make an acceptable substitute for an N95. Three layers, tight fitting, and removable middle layer being key. But most cloth masks are not going to be as good with the delta variant mainly due to fit.

- As I write this, I see no NIOSH rating system for regular consumers that is easy to use so, I guess this Wirecutter article is about as good as we can hope for.

- The best way to stay healthy is to get vaccinated and wear an N95 or three layer, tight fit mask indoors and at crowded places and events. Especially indoors.

- An N95 does not need to be tossed if you only wear it for a few hours. You should be able to get days of use out of it. I place it in the sun and use a different one the next

[see more](#)

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Sam's Bubbe → tranquility · 4 months ago

— | 🗨

I have adopted the practice, and urge all the other dog-owners I know, to carry an extra poop bag when we are walking the dog, and use that to pick up littered 'surgical' mask that we are seeing lying around. They are as disgusting as dog poop, and it is a

mask that we are seeing lying around. They are as disgusting as dog poop, and it is a public health measure, as well as environmental protection, to pick them up and discard them properly.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Cranky Observer · 4 months ago

Protective Health Gear N95 5160 seems good. Made in New Jersey. NIOSH lists N95 certification as Provisional (Pandemic), but that means it passed at least basic tests. Passes the daily fit test procedure I have been taught in mfg plant safety training.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



David Keating · 4 months ago

More info here on better masks:
<https://masks4all.co/faqs-o...>

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Ron Gehrke II · 5 months ago

Any large size recommendations? I just can't find anything.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Janet T. Community → Ron Gehrke II · 2 days ago

Sorry for the slow response. We'd recommend checking out the Harley Commodity N95 Particulate Respirator or the United States Mask Particulate Respirator N95. You can read more about them both in this section of the guide:
<https://www.nytimes.com/wir...>

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Paul W Jones → Ron Gehrke II · 3 months ago

@rongehrke I have a large face, similar to yours apparently, and most of the Wirecutter listed procedure masks will fit fine, as will the Kimberly Clark N95, although there are better masks not listed for our situation (see the link in a comment I made more recently). The Powecom listed are pretty tight on me, but are otherwise well made.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



SMH · 5 months ago

Have you evaluated the Canadian mfr, OCanada model The Curve? It has a KN95 replaceable filter inside a hard shell with both adjustable ear loops and sturdy head bands plus a rubber gasket seal around the mouth and nose area. Not inexpensive but not prohibitive and worth the cost in my opinion.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Henry Adams · 5 months ago · edited

We ended our search for legit KN95 masks with Bona Fide Masks, a very trustworthy store indeed. They have not been out there price-gouging people, their prices have been consistently low for a very long time. They were very responsive to our questions. As an authorized distributor of Powecom products, their Powecom KN95 masks are of excellent quality. We bet our lives on them.

2 ^ | v 1 · Reply · Share >



bouldereastcoaster · 5 months ago · edited

I've been buying my stuff from <https://www.sustainablesupp...>
They're local to me but also ship.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Thomas Kotwal · 5 months ago

Do you have any recommendations for child sized masks? You mentioned that your child is in school, so I'd guess that you've looked into it. I'm in the same situation, with my spouse and son both in school. We previously got child sized KF94 masks on Amazon that seemed legit, but it's hard to know what's counterfeit. Thanks!

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Blake Lawless → Thomas Kotwal · 4 months ago



Armbrust child sized masks are definitely the way to go. Light, breathable, and made of the same material used in their adult sized surgical masks.

Made in the U.S.A. too for what it's worth.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Janet T. Community → Thomas Kotwal · 5 months ago



I checked in with the reviewer, Joanne Chen. Her son wears a mask called the Happy Mask: [https://www.happymasks.com/...](https://www.happymasks.com/)

Another editor chimed in to say that an update to our guide to cloth face masks for kids is in the works, and we'll be featuring the Happy Mask in that update. It has a built-in filter and the filtration is very good. Downsides: it's hand-wash only, and it's expensive. Here's the link to that review, although the update hasn't been published yet: <https://www.nytimes.com/wir...>

Informally, Joanne noted that the Kimberly Clark masks have been hits with her family too (they fit most people because they're so pliable) and the Powecomms have also been working well.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Michael Ducker · 5 months ago



The level 3 surgical masks from Armbrust are worth mentioning - they are made in Texas and are the only kid size masks I've found <https://www.armbrustusa.com/>

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



David Keating → Michael Ducker · 4 months ago



The Armbrust masks also tested as best at filtration in an independent test by FixTheMask:

<https://fixtheface.medium.c...>

BTW, the BYD didn't do all that well by comparison.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Rath R. Weird · 5 months ago



Kimberly-Clark masks look ridiculous but performance-wise they are quite good. We have been using those for a few years working with hazardous chemicals and pathogenic bacteria, and so far every user is still on this side of the grass. A company worth a consideration, not covered in this report, is Soomlab. South Korean manufacture, few good designs, ranging from traditional KF94 to company originals. Outstanding quality (compared to Chinese imports), ship from the South Korea or US, depending on design. There are sellers of these masks on Amazon, but I strongly recommend ordering directly.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Steven Strell · 5 months ago



It would be great if you added mask extender/ear saver products to this article like this:

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/p...>

I wear glasses so having my ears do double-duty has not been pleasant. Last summer, I got a bad pimple/infection behind my ear which I attribute to mask ear loops. These plastic band extenders and other products like them have been a life saver and make these masks much more comfortable.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Jack Petri · 5 months ago · edited



Being a huge wirecutter fan for quite some time now i must say i'm really shocked to see how you completely blew over KF94s. Quality ones are easier to obtain than quality KN95s and the design provides for a much better fit/seal as well. They are also easier to find in different sizes. Quite disappointed to see you ignore these great masks while giving the inferior KN95 a lot of air time.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Janet T. Community → Jack Petri · 5 months ago



We plan to keep updating this review over time. I'll let the team know you'd like to see us cover KF94s in more depth in future.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Charles Nordlander · 5 months ago



In the swamp of bogus masks on the market that don't meet their claimed ratings for protection, a review like this one couldn't be more timely and necessary! Thanks to Joanne and Wirecutter! A big thumbs-up, as well, to your pick of KN95s from Bona Fide Masks. I've ordered from them several times and they are the real deal as a company!

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Janet T. Community → Charles Nordlander · 5 months ago



Thanks for the kind words, Charles. This has been a major undertaking, for sure. I shared your comment with the team! Glad to hear you've had good experiences with Bona Fide Masks.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



OneOfUs → Janet T. · 5 months ago



My family too has had great experiences with Bona Fide Masks' KN95 masks and their service.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share >



Guillermo Esteves · 5 months ago



I bought a 100-pack of NIOSH-approved N95 masks from Costco (you can order them online, even without a membership, but they charge an extra fee if you don't have one). They use a headband instead of ear loops (which is my preference) and they have the best seal of all the masks I've tried, but they're somewhat rigid so your mileage may vary. Worth considering as an option.

^ | v · Reply · Share >



Kendra → Guillermo Esteves · 5 months ago



N95s are required to have those head loops. It's based on a specification.

I'm actually shocked to see so many links to Amazon in the write-up, though. Given how something that might be legit when the review is posted is so easily substituted when new sellers jump on to sell fakes.... That's the literal last place I'd go to buy something that I needed to save my life, to be honest.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share >

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