

Face Mask FAQ's

The manufacturer information states Olyfun (polypropylene) cannot be put in the dryer. Is this true?

Yes and no. Remember this product is for making reusable grocery bags. If you make a bag out of OlyFun, it does not like direct heat. **No iron.** It should be washed and air dried. However, when it is sewn in a mask, in between the two layers of cotton, it does much better. You can press it on the fabric side and wash it and dry it. It is true very hot temperatures may warp it a little. We tell our nurses to wash it "like a bra" and the masks have held up through several dozen washings. They add detergent and even bleach and the mask maintains it's tight fit.

Can I use any fabric for the outside of the mask? Polyester? Denim?

The short answer is yes. The purpose of the outside fabric is comfort and containment of the inside stabilizer/interfacing. It's what's on the inside that counts. Polyester, canvas and blends can get warm, which may decrease the wearability. We have found flannel to be very comfortable on the inside.

What is the difference between the bonded interfacing and the OlyFun?

Quite a bit. The Olyfun is 100% polypropylene. Like surgical sheeting. The blue fabric that protects the sterile field from the non-sterile field. Non-woven interfacings are bonded with a two-spun layer of polypropylene or "scrim" that will hold the fibers together and prevent particles from penetrating. So non-woven (bonded fibers instead of woven fibers) interfacing has a thin layer of the protective polypropylene.

Is that why the interfacing has to be non-woven? Or bonded?

Yes. You need that non-penetrating layer. Woven interfacing is just like adding another layer of cotton. You want a solid sheet of protection. Non-woven is more like paper than fabric.

How do I tell if my interfacing will work?

We have a list of the interfacings we are familiar with on our website, if it's not listed, you'll have to google it. There are lots of brands, lots of options.

What about nonwoven cut away or tear away stabilizer?

They are often non-woven and will work, but they typically only last for about 4-5 washings as they are not really intended to be permanent.

Do I have to prewash my interfacing?

No. We prewash our fabric to allow for any possible shrinkage. Your interfacings and stabilizers will not shrink and do NOT need to be prewashed.

How many layers of interfacing do I use?

It can be variable. Our masks started out with two layers because we wanted full protection, but we found the heavier weight interfacings, like décor bond really only require one. Using two layers got difficult to sew, and was hot for the wearer.

How many layers of Olyfun do I use?

Again, we started with two (as shown in the video), but went to one. Two was very stiff and quite warm.

Can I use Felt or batting for my lining?

I think most felt is in fact a bonded fiber, as are most polyester battings, but both will be too hot to be worn for any extended period of time.

Where do I find the Olyfun and interfacings on your website?

We sell a few different mask kits (single, three, six or twelve) with choices that include fabric, elastic, free shipping or just the Oly. ALL of our kits include the OlyFun as it is our preferred mask. We only sell 60 kits per day, as we are still using the bulk of our supply to create masks for local front liners. If you prefer an interfacing, we have some Pellon 911F. If the website states we are out of stock, check back every morning or make an alternate selection, but note our supply will run out by Mid April.

I heard polypropylene was dangerous to breathe in, melts, and should not be used in masks.

There are MANY manufacturers of polypropylene. Tyvek is a polypropylene, but it has an antimicrobial and formaldehyde in it, and is not suitable for masks. Plant barrier is a polypropylene, but has an herbicide in it and is not suitable for masks. There are pillow coverings, drapery and upholstery fabrics that are all polypropylene, but may not be suitable for masks. Our Olyfun masks have been laundered well over two dozen times and the lining is lasting longer than the cotton ties. Olyfun is the only polypropylene product I have personally used and I cannot personally speak to or recommend any other product at this time. Make safe choices and independent decisions. I am not an employee of Fairfield Manufacturing and we have received nothing from them to promote their product. It is simply a product we are familiar with. It is essentially plastic fabric.

Is fusible interfacing safe to breathe?

Fusible webbing is just a thin layer of iron activated adhesive that makes the stitching job easier by holding it in place. It will wash out and is not harmful. Most of the nonwoven interfacings give you a fusible or non-fusible choice. It makes no difference. Just like the color.

Can I use a fusible web (heat and bond or wonderunder) if I can't find the other interfacing?

No. Those are just brands of fusible webbing. Not stabilizers. They will wash out.

There are holes in the front seam of the mask design. Isn't that dangerous?

I chose a pattern that I thought would fit securely. I was not interested in side gaps or pleats at the bridge. If you nestle the seams when you construct the mask (demonstrated in the first video), you will have two layers behind each hole. However, you can certainly use any mask pattern you would like. It's what's on the inside that counts. Find a mask that fits you securely all the way around, and is comfortable to wear.

Can I just use four layers of cotton?

Wearing ANY mask will decrease your chance of exposure by 77%. Our goal was to find a solution for front-line caregivers so we wanted the best possible alternative for direct exposure. If you stay home, and only wear the mask when you are maintaining your required distance of 6 feet when in public, you will be fine with four layers of cotton. If you want added protection from particles, add the polypropylene layer(s).

Why are some nurses reusing dirty N95s, and not homemade masks?

Trust. What did you use to make it? How do they know that's what you used? Nurses are repairing their dirty N95s and sanitizing them, even replacing the elastics. It's a national embarrassment. 100% of the over 34,000 masks that we have been given away have been requested. We understand it is their only option.

Should I make the covers for the N95s instead?

Do whatever you can for your frontline nurses, EMT's doctors and staff. Make them what they want. Make them whatever they will use that will keep them safe.

What about the rectangle masks?

Those are not for Medical Staff. Those are for patients, to free up any available medical grade masks for medical staff. The hospitals need those too.

Why is my mask too small?

Add your 1/4" seam allowance around your pattern, and maintain a 1/4" seam allowance. Also, it is not one size fits all, make your own personal adjustments to get the best fit.

Are there any variations to the nosepiece?

Tons. I wanted to come up with something that was easily available and effective. The security at the nose is an important part of the mask's efficiency. You can use jumbo paper clips, pipe cleaner, 18 gauge wire, etc. Be creative. It has to bend, and not break, and you have to be able to stitch it down.

Can I cut up my reusable grocery bag?

You will have to look at it and make your own determination. My guess is it is made from OlyFun, or a similar product, but that is a guess. Remember when you sew with it... do not use an iron, it will melt.

How are the masks laundered?

There is a printable PDF on our website that we give to our nurses when they receive our masks. We tell them to wash it like a bra.

Do you sell your masks?

We do not. All of ours are donated to our frontline caregivers. You may be able to find masks for sale on Etsy, but just like our nurses... you will want to trust they are being made properly. Your best bet will be to find a friend or family member that sews. They have the tools and they understand fabric and the construction.

How do I get in touch with you?

There are only two of us. We answer phone calls, emails, facebook messages and youtube questions for hours and hours every day. Yesterday I received 1409 emails in one day. You may not hear back from us, not because we don't care, it is just an impossible task. We have tried to put every tool we can on our website at www.fabricpatch.net. The studies, printables and videos are all on one Covid 19 page, just scroll down it.

Is your mask really the best?

It's the best I could come up with, which has no guarantee. My opinion comes from an understanding of medicine, infection control and fabric. Please do your own research and make the decision that is best for you. The most important defense is to self isolate. Wear a mask when you have to be out. Protect others from your germs, and protect yourself from theirs. Stay inside or stay covered to stay safe.

Be nice to one another. Stay calm and stay healthy.