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# the Strategist

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## The Fabric Face Masks Health-Care Workers Buy Themselves

By Karen Iorio Adelson

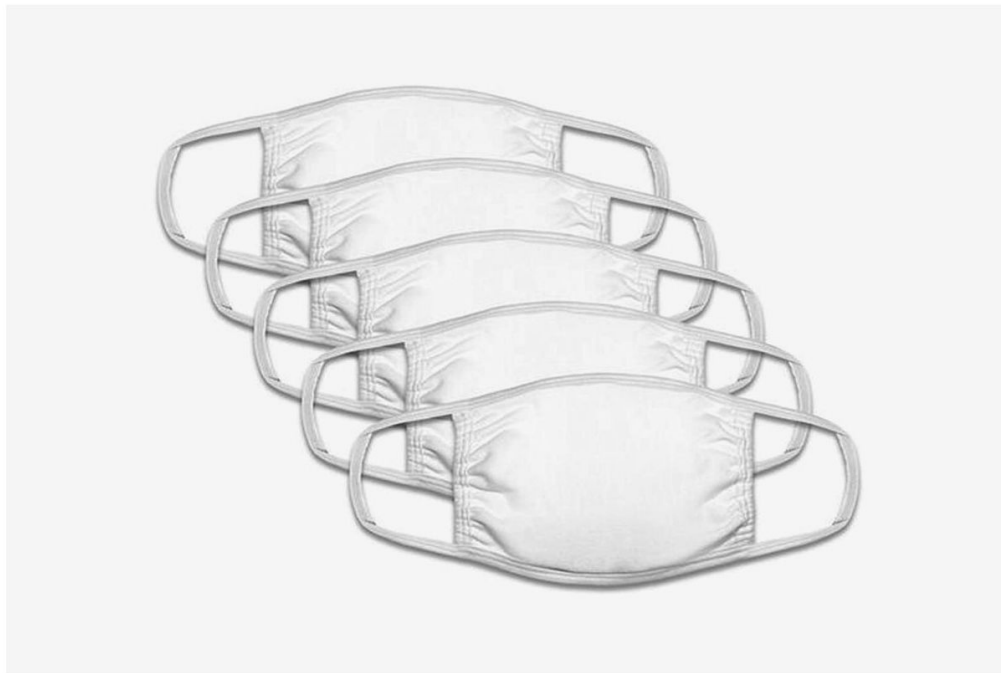


Senior writer Karen Iorio Adelson has covered everything from stocking a medicine cabinet to adopting a pet. She's especially passionate about running (she worked in a running store) and cat furniture.



In just a couple of months, it seems like we've all become face mask connoisseurs, with opinions on adjustable nose bridges, elastic ear loops versus string ties, and insertable filters. This newfound expertise is a good thing, as the CDC and other medical experts agree that wearing face coverings — along with frequent hand-washing and social distancing whenever possible — is a key factor in slowing the spread of the coronavirus.

While we've written a lot about masks before on the Strategist (including our personal favorites, the best options for kids, and the best masks for running outdoors), we were curious about the face masks that health-care professionals wear when they're off the clock. Some doctors and nurses we spoke with say they'll wear N95 respirators or surgical masks outside of clinical settings, but because the current guidance for the public is to stick with cloth masks and save those for the professionals who need them, we've included only fabric options below.



**Fruit of the Loom Reusable Cotton Face Mask  
Non-Medical, 5 Pack**

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\$15

San Diego-based facial plastic surgeon Amir Karam says he's tried lots of cloth masks but these three-ply cotton ones are his favorite. He tells us that cotton has "been shown to be the most protective material," and "it's light and breathable even if you use styles that include two or three layers." He says these masks "cover a fair amount of facial landscape," which maximizes protection, and are "less likely to require adjusting."

\$15 AT AMAZON

\$15 AT FRUIT OF THE LOOM



### Staples 3-Ply Cloth Face Masks, 10-Pack

\$30

While the Fruit of the Loom mask above has elastic ear loops to keep it in place, if you want a more customizable fit, Karam likes that these masks have adjustable straps around the ears.

\$30 AT STAPLES