

13 Expert-Approved Exercise Masks That Will Hold Up Against Any Workout

By Amy Schlinger | April 6, 2021

Reviewed by Janell Sherr, MD



Your mask needs to be easy to move and sweat in, but it should also meet CDC safety guidelines.

Image Credit: kazuma seki/iStock/GettyImages

Exercise masks might as well be the new noise-cancelling headphones. You just don't leave home, let alone break a sweat, without them.

"We have learned that when exercising indoors, if you have a good fitting mask that covers with some snugness your nose and mouth, you have fairly decent protection. And if the person next to you has one as well, it's an exponential improvement," says

Paul Silka, MD, chair of the department of emergency medicine at the [Regional Medical Center](#) of San Jose, California. "[Outdoors](#) is a bit safer, but you still need to wear a mask or gaiter if you're around other people."

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), a reusable mask should:

- Have two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric
- Completely cover your nose and mouth
- Fit snugly against the sides of your face without any gaps
- Have a moldable nose wire to prevent air from leaking out of the top

Don't choose masks that:

- Are made of fabrics like vinyl that make it hard to breathe
- Have exhalation valves or vents, which allow virus particles to escape
- Are intended for healthcare workers, including N95 respirators

Luckily, there are lots of face masks on the market designed with workouts in mind.

We spoke with medical experts and tried out dozens ourselves to find the 13 best masks for working out.

Warning

We still have a lot to learn about [COVID-19](#). These exercise masks all meet CDC recommendations, but there's no magic mask that eliminates all possibility of infection. Wash your hands both before and after working out and follow social distancing guidelines.

1. Best Overall: Under Armour Sportsmask



Image Credit: UnderArmour.com/LIVESTRONG.com

UA is all about fitness — and this mask shows it. The polyurethane material allows easy airflow while taming moisture and sweat, Dr. Silka says. Plus, it's water resistant and antimicrobial on the inside. It has a structured design that fits well over your face and has a moldable nose bridge.

We wore it [running](#) and [strength training](#) and had little need to touch or mess with it.

Buy it: UnderArmour.com; Price: \$30

2. Best for Group Workouts: Athleta Women's Activate Face Mask



Image Credit: [Athleta.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.athleta.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

Tough workout? Don't sweat it. Shape and mold this fitness mask to your nose and cheeks, then adjust the ear loops for a personalized fit.

"A good fitting mask covers, with some snugness on your nose and mouth," Dr. Silka says. It's extremely breathable, too.

We liked the look of this pick and loved that it stayed in place while still being easy to talk in. That's helpful during group workouts and classes.

Buy it: [Athleta.com](https://www.athleta.com); Price: \$30 for 2

3. Best for Plyometric Workouts: Dolan Ecozinc Antibacterial Runner's Mask 2.0



Image Credit: ShopDolan.com/LIVESTRONG.com

Yes, it's called a runner's mask, but we adore it for all things plyo. In our tests, it fit like a second skin and didn't slip or move at all.

With this mask, the loops fit around your head, rather than ears. For some people, that can feel more secure, explains Ryan Waldman, DPT, a physical therapist at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center in New York.

It's also made of an antimicrobial, lightweight fabric and has two layers. For extra protection, its pocket can hold a filter.

Buy it: ShopDolan.com; Price: \$18

4. Best for Daily Wear: Reebok Face Mask



Image Credit: [Amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

With Reebok, you get three masks for just over \$20. That meant we could wear one while the others were in the wash.

Plus, these affordable masks are made from recycled poly and elastane fabric, giving them a soft, stretchy feel. "The more comfortable people are in a mask, the more compliant they are with wearing one," Waldman says.

Buy it: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); Price: \$21.31 for 3

5. Best Eco-Friendly Pick: ONZIE Mindful Face Covering



Image Credit: [Amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

You can feel good knowing this fitness mask not only provides protection, it's made from up-cycled materials.

It's a lightweight and stretchy option, with fabric ear loops that are cushy and don't pull on your ears. It fits pretty snug to your face. But because we weren't breathing really hard during our [Hatha yoga](#) workout, it never felt like an issue.

Buy it: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); Price: \$24

6. Best Gaiter Option: MISSION Neck Gaiter



Image Credit: [Amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

If you prefer the fuller coverage of a gaiter, look no further. This one comes in seven colors, provides UPF 50 sun protection and is machine washable. It also has cooling technology that activates when the mask gets wet. So as soon as you start to sweat, it will start to cool.

We wore this gaiter on hikes and found it easy to pull up when we passed people along our route, and down again when we had the trail to ourselves.

"I always have this gaiter with me should someone venture near me while I'm exercising outside," Dr. Silka says. "It's comfortable and breathable."

Buy it: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); Price: \$19.99

7. Best Head-Strap Version: SMRTFT Sport Mask S1



Image Credit: [Smrfft.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://smrfft.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

This reversible mask is made out of a microknit filter fabric designed to keep even the tiniest of particles out. But it's still extremely breathable, Waldman says.

It has a secure, snug fit with thicker straps that go around the head. So we loved wearing it outside in chilly temps. It provided a bit of extra coverage and warmth.

Buy it: [Smrfft.com](https://smrfft.com); Price: \$24.95

8. Best Basic Pick: Ruby Ribbon Face Covering



Image Credit: [RubyRibbon.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.RubyRibbon.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

While this mask is specifically designed for workouts, it still performs well, especially if you're sticking with low-intensity workouts like walking or cycling.

"The fact that you're able to press and conform it to fit your face is ideal," Waldman says.

There's metal in the nose bridge and the ear loops are small but very stretchy, so they fit well and won't have you fidgeting.

Buy it: [RubyRibbon.com](https://www.RubyRibbon.com); Price: \$65 for 5

9. Best "Barely There" Option: Lululemon Double-Strap Face Mask



Image Credit: [Lululemon.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://lululemon.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

Pull one of the adjustable straps around your head and the other around the back of your neck to securely hold this pick in place. The fabric is breathable, stretchy, quick-drying and feels soft against your skin.

We wore it for a tough HIIT workout and never felt it moving around. It was nice to focus on our workout and not have to mess around with the mask.

"If you don't have to adjust and touch your mask constantly throughout the workout, that's a good thing," Dr. Silka says.

Buy it: [Lululemon.com](https://lululemon.com); Price: \$28

10. Best for Water Sports: Sweatmask



Image Credit: [SweatMask.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.SweatMask.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

This buy is made out of a very cushy, almost neoprene-like material that's extremely breathable. Plus, it helps sweat and moisture quickly evaporate.

Keep in mind that it's a bit of a blend between a cloth and disposable mask. You can wash and wear it three to five times. But after that, recycle it.

Buy it: [SweatMask.com](https://www.SweatMask.com); Price: \$25 for 5

11. Best With Removable Filters: Outdoor Research Adrenaline Sports Face-Mask Kit



Image Credit: OutdoorResearch.com/LIVESTRONG.com

A fan favorite, this washable, reusable mask comes with filters and has an adjustable, stretchy head strap. It's extremely breathable and doesn't suction against your mouth when you inhale. We used it for multiple high-intensity workouts, and loved that it stayed in place the whole time — even when we did burpees!

"Lots of my patients who are athletes have raved about this mask," Waldman says. "I even have ones who have done CrossFit in it."

Buy it: OutdoorResearch.com; Price: \$29

12. Best for Low-Intensity Workouts: adidas Originals Trefoil Face Cover



Image Credit: [Zappos.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.zappos.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

Low-profile enough to not get in the way, but protective enough to get the job done; this poly-spandex mask stretches as you move.

The ear loops are soft and the mask sits secure. We wore this mask on a couple long walks and found that it kept its shape well.

"You can even pull this mask up a little higher on the nose to ensure it doesn't fall down while you're working out," Waldman says. "It still forms a tight seal."

Buy it: [Zappos.com](https://www.zappos.com); Price: \$19.99

13. Best Casual Choice: INEX Gear The Better Face Mask



Image Credit: [Amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com](https://www.amazon.com/LIVESTRONG.com)

This buy is great for exercise, but also for everyday wear. Wear it in black, navy, bright blue or woodrose.

It feels good against the face and, while it has a tight fit, it's easy to breathe in. It has nanofiber filtration technology to keep as many germs away as possible. Adjust the ear toggles for a unique fit.

We thought it was a perfect blend between fashion and function.

Buy it: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com); Price: \$22.95

Tip

It's great to have a mask that you can wash and wear over and over — but you actually have to wash it. When you work out, [sweat and oils build up](#) on the mask.

“You should wash it after each time you exercise, especially if it's wet and sweaty, so bacteria doesn't build up,” Dr. Silka says. “If the fabric starts to degrade, throw it out.”

3 Tips for Buying an Exercise Face Mask

1. Fit Is the Most Important Factor

Just because a mask fits one person well, it doesn't mean it's going to be the right fit for you.

"The most important thing is a good, snug fit," explains Dr. Silka. "It needs to have a tight fit around your nose and mouth and not slip down or move around much." Nose bridges work well for this.

If you're purchasing a mask online, be sure to check out the brand's size chart to ensure you're getting the right size to cover your nose and nose. You don't want any gaps or pulling.

Ear Loops, Head Loops, or a Gaiter?

It's all about personal preference, Waldman says. Choose whichever style provides the most comfortable and secure fit for you.

2. Breathable Fabrics Are Essential

When working out is on the agenda, it's vital that your mask's fabric allows you to easily get all of the air you crave, Waldman says. When you take a deep inhale, the fabric shouldn't find its way into your mouth.

If you do feel any shortness of breath when exercising, stop and contact your doctor or medical professional right away.

What About Antimicrobial Fabrics?

Dr. Silka and Waldman both agree that, at this point, there's little proof that antimicrobial masks work any better than plain cloth ones.

3. For Intense Workouts, Choose Wicking Fabrics

Cotton and other lightweight fabrics can be super comfy for light workouts like leisurely walking and restorative yoga.

But if you plan to really get your heart rate up, go for a mask that's designed to help evaporate and wick sweat along with hot, moist breath from your face. It will help keep things on the dry side, even during warm-weather outdoor workouts, Waldman says.