Dear [Mom],

Want a meaningful way to help fight the coronavirus while staying at home? There is a shortage of masks for healthcare workers and other professionals keeping us safe (grocers, janitors, pharmacists). While these workers should have proper protective gear-- and hopefully will very soon-- a newly-formed group called [Masks for Humanity](https://www.masks4humanity.com/) is encouraging people to sew masks at home and get them to people who need them. You may even have supplies at home. Even if you don’t sew, you can help! This email has all the info you need to help with this effort:

1. **Make Masks:** There are a lot of different patterns floating around now. Masks for Humanity is starting with this [basic approved pattern](https://www.instructables.com/id/AB-Mask-for-a-Nurse-by-a-Nurse/?fbclid=IwAR0_qOakNs5kAO5SEi85pHbH34euzuotH15cbKmQ7BgMMiVCxd_8g3VyI_8). Masks for Humanity suggests this pattern because you only need fabric (no elastics) and doctors have told them they like it. Be sure to keep one or two of your handmade masks to test and keep for yourself. If information changes, they will share!
2. **Give out Masks:** Once you have made a bunch of masks, you can give them to a local hospital, grocery store, gas station, pharmacy, or delivery person. If you are not going out, leave a note for your mail person or ask a neighbor to pass them on when they next go to the grocery store, get gas, or stop by somewhere people need them. Consider including a note to explain that you hand made the masks to help protect essential workers. Masks for Humanity is also generating a [gigantic list](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vkm6LJY7qTEQTGU9or4Wx1cxYEfQOMivmVkEUmuKKBo/edit?usp=sharing) of those who need masks you may not know. You can look at who is asking, if there is a specific/different pattern and see if you can help them, too.
3. **Be a connector! This is huge.**
* Share this email with friends.
* Ask organizations you care about if they need masks. Have the organizations share their needs [here](https://forms.gle/FF5JEHSFWrbZ3btbA). All essential workers are included on this list; we need to take care of everyone.
* If you read an article about a group making masks, or if you are part of one, get in touch with them and send them this [link](https://forms.gle/PL6RuiSDcm4agvj66) so Masks for Humanity can share and amplify their work. Masks for Humanity wants to help everyone get what they need.
1. **Share Your Work:** If you are on Facebook or Instagram, share a photo of your masks and your story with #Masks4Humanity and tag @masks4humanity. You will be encouraging others to join in and help.

Masks for Humanity has put together a bunch of other info that I’ve put below, in case it is helpful. But in the meantime, please get started making masks and share this note with your friends.

Thank you for making the world a little better.

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Why are we making handmade masks? Don’t hospitals, etc. have enough protective gear?** We should not have to do this. Our healthcare professionals and other essential workers (janitors, grocers, mail carriers, pharmacists, delivery people) are keeping us safe and deserve to be kept safe. Unfortunately, there is a severe shortage of [adequate protective gear](https://www.nytimes.com/article/face-masks-coronavirus.html). New York [Governor Cuomo is working with a fashion designer](https://abcnews.go.com/GMA/Style/gov-cuomo-touch-christian-siriano-sew-masks-amid/story?id=69712630) to get handmade masks. The CDC recently issued [guidance on how healthcare professionals should optimize facemask usage when there is limited supply](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/face-masks.html). Including in that guidance was a last resort option to use homemade masks or bandanas when proper protective equipment was not available. We hope that the mask shortage is quickly resolved but, in the meantime, we can do our part to provide a stopgap.

**Are homemade masks effective at protecting workers?** There has been some research about using homemade masks when proper medical grade protection is not available. The research shows that 1) homemade masks should be a last resort 2) some materials are more effective than others at filtering out viruses. A [2013 study from University of Cambridge on using homemade masks in an influenza epidemic](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/crisis-alternate-strategies.html) found that while home-made masks fit 50% as well as surgical masks, they “significantly reduced the number of microorganisms expelled by the wearer and were one-third as effective in blocking transmission as surgical masks.” In other words, **medical-grade masks are much better protection, but homemade masks can provide significant protection and are better than nothing.**

**Are some materials better than others?** Yes. We [recommend you use cotton t-shirts, bedsheets, dish towels](https://smartairfilters.com/en/blog/diy-homemade-mask-protect-virus-coronavirus/?rel=1&fbclid=IwAR3O7vL55eSlHx7LmI4XDErKXg5fzgQ1aYPEeXn11k7KPY95x_Cu6cZzwM0) or other similar materials. While [vacuum cleaner bags have been shown to be more effective at filtering out particles](https://smartairfilters.com/en/blog/best-materials-make-diy-face-mask-virus/), we want all Masks for Humanity masks to be machine washable so they can be sterilized and reused.

**Can I make masks if I am sick?** If you suspect you are sick, please don’t make masks for others. While it is [unlikely the virus can last on fabric-- or any packaging you place the masks in-- for more than a day](https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973), we all should do our part to stop any potential spread. But maybe make one for yourself, so you keep those in your household safe.

**How do I get in touch with Masks for Humanity?**

Website: [Masks4Humanity.org](http://masks4humanity.org)

Email: Masks4Humanity@gmail.com

Social Media: @Masks4Humanity on [Facebook](http://masks4humanity), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/masks4humanity), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/masks4humanity/)