Opinion

It's Time to Make Your Own Face Mask

Here's how to do it.

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**Opinion Columnist**

A homemade protective face mask can help limit the spread of the coronavirus.

It shouldn't have come to this, but here we are. The world is running out of face masks for health care workers, which is one reason American officials, including the surgeon general, have warned members of the public against buying their own masks for protection against the coronavirus.

But that doesn't mean face masks for the public are a bad idea, if we had enough masks. Contrary to what American officials told us, many studies show that widespread mask-wearing might be a very effective complement to hand-washing, social-distancing and other measures to mitigate the pandemic. Health officials in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Japan suggest that people wear masks in certain situations — if they're symptomatic, for instance, or if they're in crowded, not-very-well-ventilated places, like airplanes. Studies have also shown that mask-wearing (in conjunction with hand-washing) reduces the spread of infection within households or other shared living spaces, like residence halls.

But how to get your hands on a mask, when there are no masks? The internet has a plan: Make your own. Sewers and preppers have lately been flooding social media with designs for DIY masks made out of household materials — some T-shirt fabric, elastic ribbon and a little bit of stitching.

1. You'll need scissors, sewing supplies and a breathable, tightly woven cotton fabric.
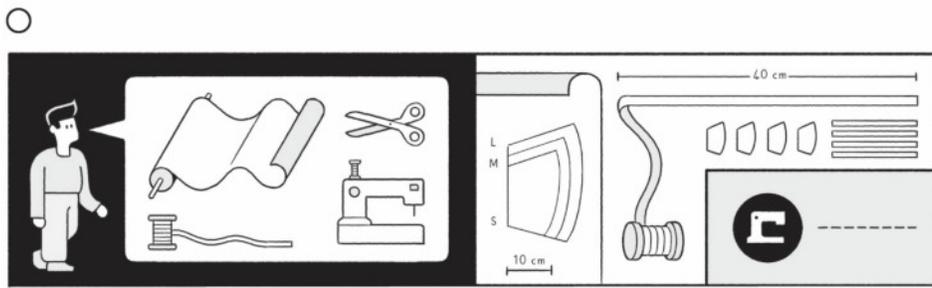

2. Using the template , cut four pieces of fabric. Take two pieces and sew the curved side together, creating the front of the mask. Then do it again for the other two pieces of fabric, creating the back side of the mask.
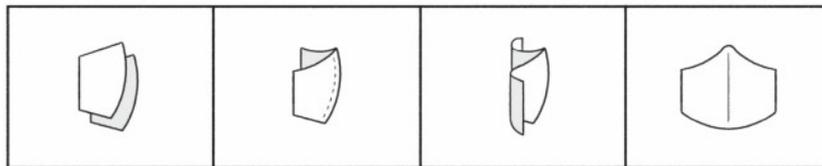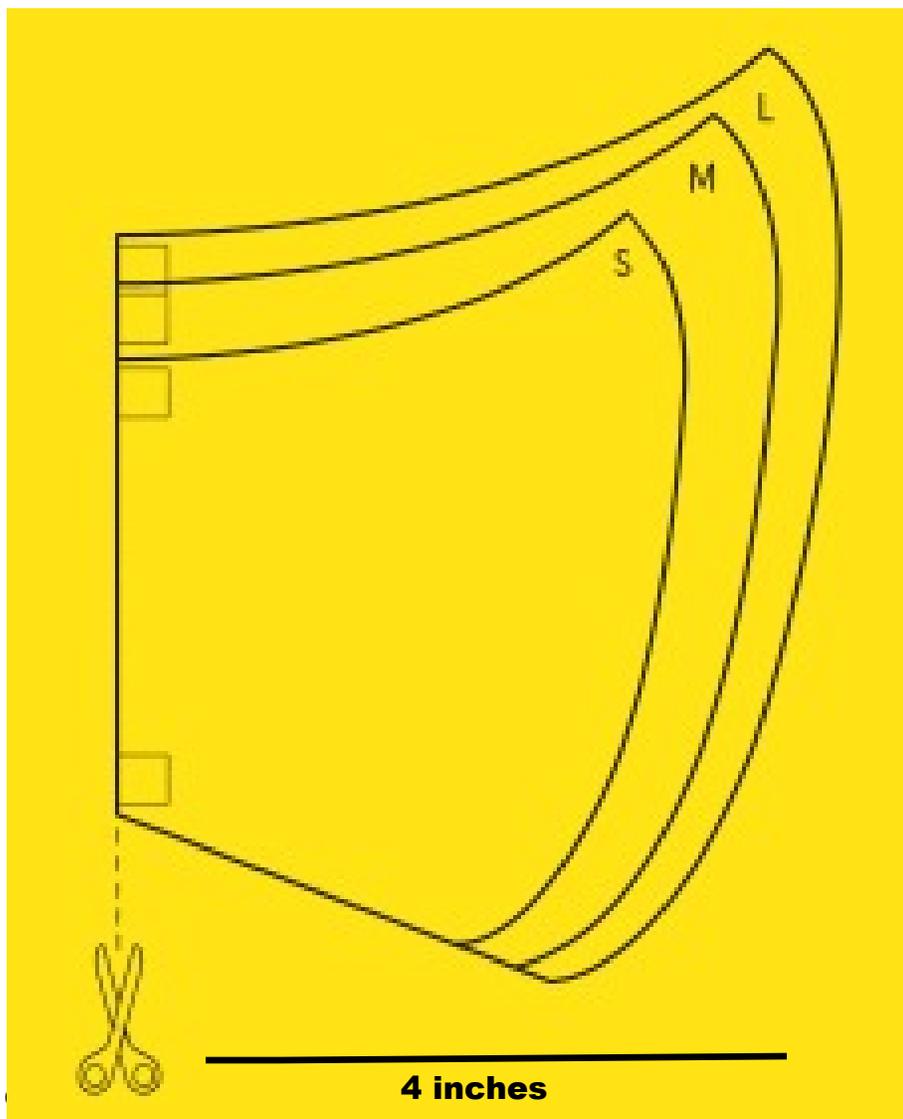

3. Now you will sew the ribbons. Place one side of the mask on the table, seam side down. Place a ribbon on each corner with the ends slightly peaking over the edges. Sew the ribbons in place. Pull all ribbons across the right side. Place the other mask on top, seam side up, sandwiching the ribbons. Sew the two masks together, leaving the area on the right side of the mask unsewn. Then turn the mask inside-out by pulling the ribbons through the unsewn hole.
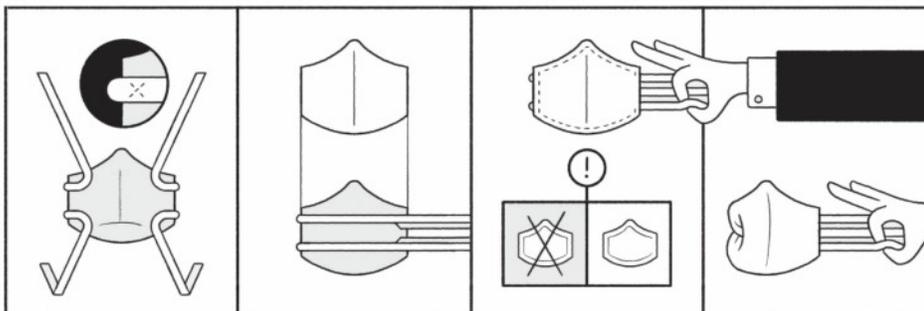
4. Now that the mask is reversed, sew the remaining gap closed. You're done!
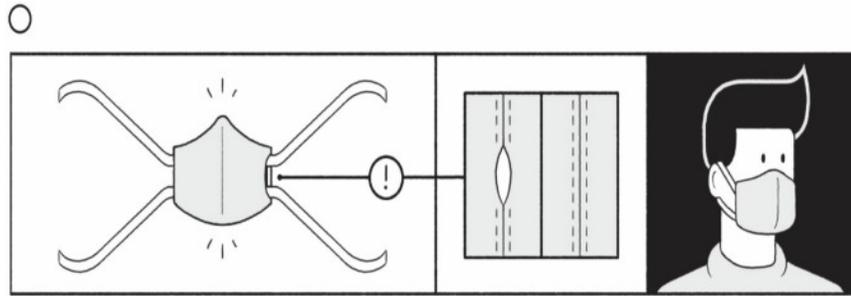
Who knew the future would look so apocalyptically homespun — so "Mad Max" meets "Little House on the Prairie"? Yet this is no useless online fad; homemade masks for all could make a huge difference. At least two peer-reviewed studies show that while DIY masks are not nearly as effective as commercial masks made for health care workers, they are far better than nothing. Homemade masks both limit the spread of infectious droplets in the air and discourage people from touching their faces

4 strips of

4 inches