

Sewing Face Masks for Iowa City Area Healthcare Facilities In Response to the COVID-19 Virus Pandemic

Healthcare facilities in the Iowa City area have requested two different types of masks for use in their facilities. Be sure to check each facility's specifications to ensure that you make the types of masks that a particular facility is seeking.

Iowa City Face Mask #1: The Olson Mask

The **Olson Mask** has an interior pocket to hold an N95 filter mask which would be supplied by the healthcare facility. If you are making this for personal use and don't have access to an N95 filter mask, you can instead insert a piece of filter fabric like you would find in a HEPA vacuum bag.

Number needed as of 3/25/2020: At least 540, probably more. Mercy One in Iowa City has requested 300+ masks and the 20 long-term care facilities in the area have collectively requested 240 (12 for each facility). We're waiting to hear from the VA Hospital. The quantity needed will probably increase as we expand to serve other healthcare facilities.



Olson Mask



Olson Mask – Interior

[Olson Mask Pattern](#) — see notes on next page re: customizing pattern for Iowa City healthcare facilities. To make pattern pieces easier to work with, consider tracing them onto freezer paper then ironing them onto fabric to keep them temporarily in place. You may be able to cut 2-3 layers at a time with practice

[Olson Mask Instructional Video](#)

IMPORTANT!!

Please ensure that the supplies are stored and masks are made in a smoke-free environment and that no one in the household has been exposed to COVID-19.

Equipment & Supplies needed

Cotton or cotton-poly woven fabric, high thread count (quilting quality), prewashed in hot water, ~1/2 yard will make 2-3 masks depending on size

You're welcome to use any color or print, but when choosing fabrics, remember that both male and female medical personnel will use these masks.

All-purpose thread

Materials needed to secure mask to head. **Quantities given are FOR EACH MASK**

- 2 hair elastics (as shown in pattern), **OR**
- 2 strips of 1/4" or smaller braided elastic or elastic cord cut in 7" lengths and tied in a circle, **OR**
- 2 32" lengths of twill tape, bias tape, or narrow ribbon to use as fabric ties

Scissors

Sewing machine

Optional for personal use: Bendable metal strip to shape mask around top of nose (see options on next page)

Notes on Customizing the Olson Mask Pattern for use in Iowa City

The Olson Mask was developed by staff at UnityPoint Health in Cedar Rapids. Hospital staff there completes the final steps in making these masks instead of asking the mask makers to do them. However, the healthcare facilities in Iowa City are not equipped to complete these steps so we must ask our volunteer seamstresses to do them instead.

You'll need to add elastic to secure the face mask onto the wearer's ears

The original pattern says that it would not be necessary to add elastic hair bands because the hospital will do this itself. **For Iowa City, the mask makers must complete this step themselves.**

There are several options:

- Purchase hair bands (Project Coordinators have a limited supply that they can provide on request).
- Use 7" lengths of elastic (round cord or flat braid 1/4" or less) to make loops that will go around the ears. Thread cord through open channel on each side of mask, knot the two ends together, then pull the knot into the opening so it doesn't show. (Project Coordinators have a limited supply that they can provide on request).
- Add fabric ties made from double wide bias tape cut in 32" lengths, thread them through the channels on each side, secure the ties with a few stitches to keep them from falling out, then tie the mask at the back of the head.

Adding metal band or similar device to help seal the mask around top of nose

The original pattern says that the hospital will add this metal piece. **For masks going to Mercy Iowa City and local care centers, we don't need to add the metal piece. Mercy staff will only use them along with a N95 mask which already has a metal piece over the nose, so we don't need to put metal strips into the fabric masks too.**

If you want to make one for personal use that includes the metal nose piece, here are some options:

- Secure twist tie(s) inside a fabric sleeve to sew to the inside of the mask by hand or machine. Plastic coated ones like those used for gardening should hold up during washing.
- Cut a 1"x2.5" strip from a disposable aluminum baking pan, folding it lengthwise into thirds and then folding each small end in so that there are no sharp edges, then enclosing it in a fabric sleeve and sewing it inside the mask by hand or machine. This method is adapted from a [video](#) for a different type of face mask which shows cutting the pan at 13:30 and sewing the strip into the mask at 22:00.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'RE WORKING ON SO WE CAN MAKE SURE WE STAY ON TRACK

Register pledges for [Olson Face Masks](#) and/or for [Flat Pleated Face Masks](#) (we're tracking the two masks separately, so you'll need to enter twice if you're making both).

WHEN YOU HAVE OLSON MASKS READY TO DONATE

TO MERCY IOWA CITY. Please enclose the completed masks in plastic bags or closed plastic boxes. All masks will be sterilized before use. If possible, combine your masks with those of other makers and deliver them in batches. Call Mercy Materiel Management at 319-339-3647 Monday-Friday from 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m. to schedule an appointment for drop off. Donations made on weekends can be scheduled by calling Mercy Security at 319-339-3694. Donations should be delivered to the loading dock located on Johnson Street between Market and Bloomington Streets.

TO NURSING HOMES AND LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES IN THE IOWA CITY AREA

Put Olson masks into plastic bags in groups of 12. Drop them in the container marked "Masks" just inside the [Oaknoll Health Center](#) located near the intersection of Oakcrest and George Streets in Iowa City. (Note: This is **NOT** the main entrance to Oaknoll.) A staffer will be inside the door from 6am to 6pm to answer questions as needed. The masks will be distributed to 20 participating care centers in Iowa City, Coralville, West Liberty, West Branch, Hills, and Lone Tree
