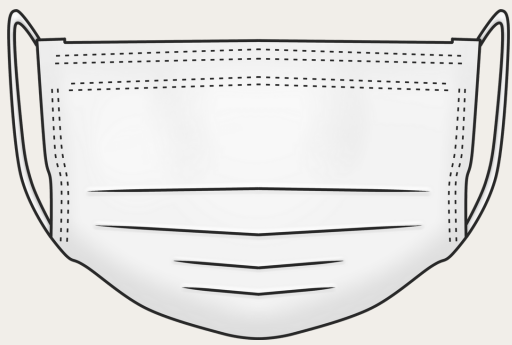


Mask Pollution



Masks are an important way to reduce the spread of covid-19. Properly wearing a mask over the nose and mouth eliminates a large percentage of transmission.

an estimated 129 billion face masks are produced a month globally

This comes out to an astounding 3 million produced a minute. Furthermore, most of these masks are not properly discarded (science daily, 2021).

Mask production and disposal is similar to plastic bottle production, but with no regulations on how to discard masks they end up in landfills and littered through out environment.

Masks worn by medical professionals

- Masks that are used in a medical facility are considered class-A waste and with this classification are properly disposed of
- proper disposal is both good for the environment and decreases possible transmission from medical facilities
- even so, medical waste increase due to the pandemic has begun to affect municipal waste facilities and is causing environmental degradation
- there needs to be new manners of dealing with hazardous medical waste to ensure safety of both people and the environment

General Public masks

Masks that are used by the general public are unclassified waste. This means they cannot be recycled or properly disposed of due to a fear of them being contaminated. Additionally people often discard masks outside of trash bins, so many masks are littering the environment or even being accidentally eaten by animals.

what to do?

- aim for using a reusable mask (or two!) and keep track of it
- if using a disposable mask, when discarding, ensure it ends up in a trash bin and snap the cords



Photo from bbc science video: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/science-environment-53287940>

mask pollution is everywhere: outdoor areas have become dumping grounds for masks. They are disrupting every ecosystem, from those in marine areas to the tops of mountains

Sources:

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