Using masks to fight COVID-19.

Many people are using face masks to prevent either catching or passing on COVID-19. There is a lot of information on how to prevent the virus. Effective strategies include: social distancing, washing hands, isolation and self-quarantine. Unfortunately, there is not a great deal of evidence regarding the use of face masks in non-medical settings. It is believed that masks may be effective in reducing the amount of virus in the community if people who are infected with COVID-19 wear masks to protect others. However at present, there is no verifiable scientific evidence to substantiate the effectiveness of face masks.

There are some points to consider if you want to use a face mask at this time.

1. Before fitting your face mask, wash your hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Alternatively use a hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol. As a rough guide, as you wash your hands sing 'Happy Birthday' twice.

2. When putting the mask on, don't touch the mask itself. Only hold it by the ties or loops used to secure it. If the mask has ear loops, hold the mask by both ear loops and place one loop over each ear. If it has ties, tie the upper strings in a secure bow near the crown of your head. Tie the bottom strings securely in a bow near the nape of your neck.

3. Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin. Be sure that the mask fits snugly. Don't touch the mask once it's in position. If the mask gets soiled or damp, replace it with a new one. Once you have the mask on, don't pull it down or hang it around your neck.

4. Don't touch the mask once it's secured on your face, as the mask may have virus particles on it. If you do have to touch the face mask while you are wearing it, wash your hands first. Be sure to wash your hands afterward or use a hand sanitiser. If they are cloth masks have at least two masks and cycle them, washing each one after each single use. Do not share your masks with others.

5. It's very important to remember that a face mask will not protect your eyes. It is possible for the virus to enter the body through the eyes. It is important to remember not to touch your eyes or face if you are out in public. And remember to wash your hands regularly throughout the day.

6. Before you take off the mask wash your hands well or use a hand sanitiser. Avoid touching the mask itself, remove it by holding the ties or loops only. After removing the mask if it's a surgical mask dispose of it with care, if it is a cloth mask wash your hands thoroughly or use a hand sanitiser. After removing your mask, put it in the wash immediately and wash with detergent, hot water and bleach.