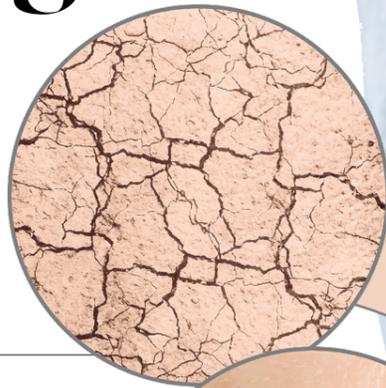


# How to avoid skin irritation from face masks during Covid-19

This article was independently sourced by *Specialist Forum*.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, wearing face masks have become part of our daily lives, but wearing them is taking a toll on our skin. *Specialist Forum* chatted to Durban-based female general and aesthetic practitioner Dr Musarrath Raboobee, who says that she has seen a marked increase in the incidence of acne in her practice, especially among people who have to wear masks for extended periods. Studies show the regular wearing of face masks can also exacerbate flare-ups in other skin conditions such as eczema. We asked her how to prevent what is increasingly being referred to as 'maskne' and flare-ups.



Stick to a simple and gentle skin care routine. Cleanse before and after wearing a mask. Use a good exfoliating cleanser that is salicylic acid based. This will remove oil, debris and acne-causing bacteria. Salicylic acid is an anti-inflammatory and will also assist with redness and inflamed pimples.

Your night time routine will be of extreme importance now more than ever. Cut down on active ingredients to reduce skin irritation. Use active ingredients such as retinol at night only and be careful not to increase the quantity you usually use.

Use acne patches under your mask and at night to help acne papules and pustules to heal quickly and without causing the complication of acne scarring.

Take a 10-15 minute break from wearing a mask every four hours, or when it is safe to do so (eg when you're alone in your car or at least two meters away from other people).

Patient with facial eczema should opt for products that contain weaker topical steroids or steroid-sparing ingredients, like pimecrolimus, tacrolimus, and crisaborol. Barrier repair creams are also recommended.

1 Ensure you wash your fabric mask daily. This removes sebum/oil and skin cells that collect on the inner surface of the mask and contribute to acne. It is preferable to have two masks (or more) so as to ensure you always have a clean mask available. Use fragrance-free laundry detergent to wash your mask.

2 Apply an oil-free, non-comedogenic moisturiser to damp skin before and after wearing your mask. This can prevent your skin from becoming dry and irritated, encourages the skin's natural healing process and keeps skin hydrated.

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5 Skip make-up under your mask as this creates an additional layer to trap dead cells, oil and debris/dirt on your skin.

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6 Fabric choice can impact the development of 'maskne' and exacerbate flare-ups. Try to choose a soft, natural and breathable fabric like 100% cotton, as recommended by the American Academy of Dermatology. Avoid synthetic fibres such as nylon and polyester.

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9 Remember to wash your hands before and after removing your mask.

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