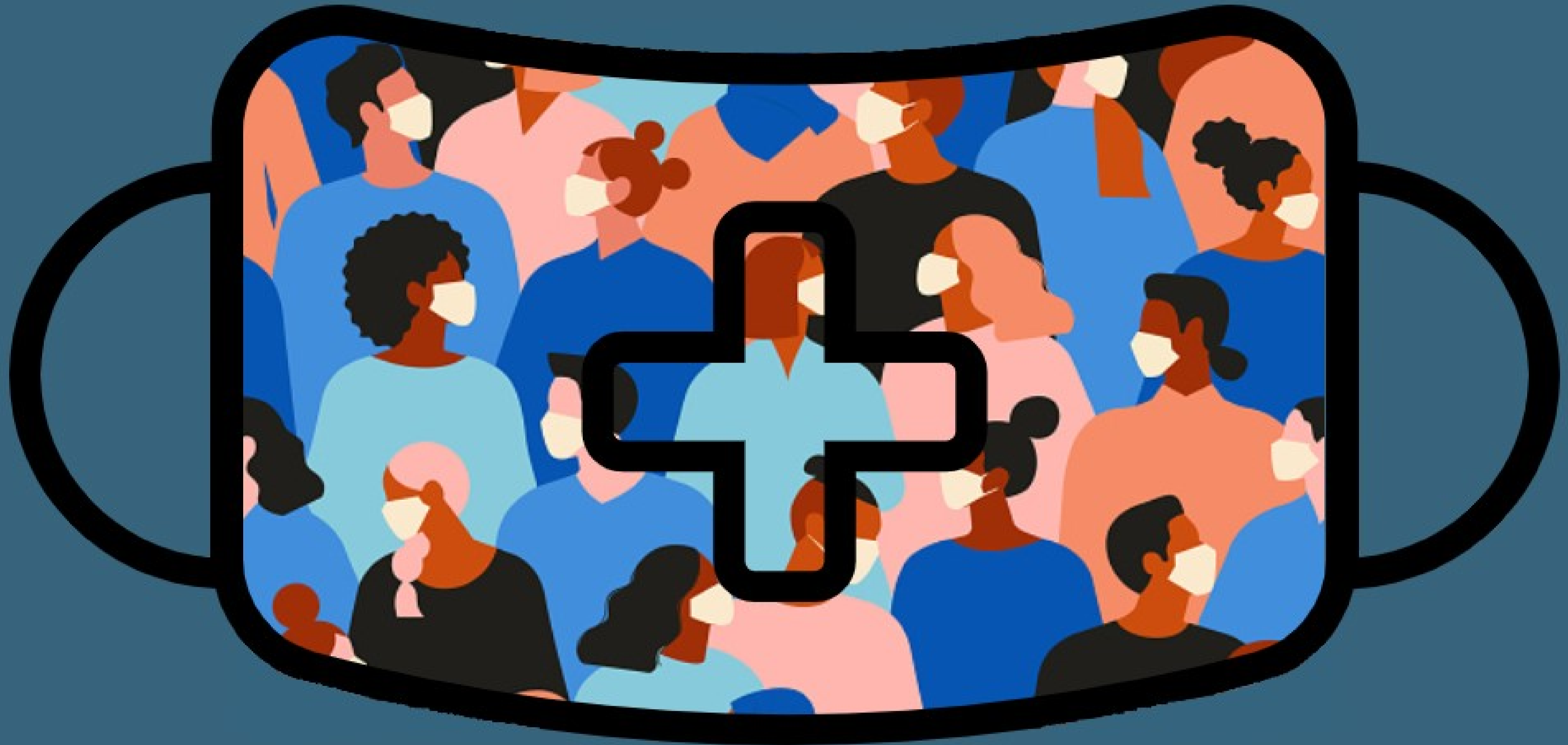


It's what's behind the mask that matters most.



Wearing a homemade mask, which is increasingly becoming the only option for many, can help protect ourselves and those around us from COVID-19.

But for people of color, racial bias and stereotypes of criminality have created real fears about going out in public with this kind of protection. People of color have been removed from stores for wearing masks and many [fear for their lives](#).

These communities are in a lose-lose situation: risk exposure to the disease, or risk being racially profiled (or maybe worse).



"I don't feel safe wearing a handkerchief or something else that isn't CLEARLY a protective mask covering my face to the store because I am a Black man living in this world. I want to stay alive but I also want to stay alive." - @Aaron_TheThomas

No one should be treated with fear or like a criminal for doing their part to protect the public.

This is a real threat for people of color. Shaming them for not choosing to wear a mask is also an inappropriate response.

Remember that these are difficult times for everyone and that we are all in this together.



COLORADO
Office of Health Equity

Department of Public Health & Environment