

## 《盛夏临近 日本多家企业推出夏季清凉口罩》

Several companies in different fields are hurrying to develop cool and dry face masks to help people in the upcoming sweltering summer heat in Japan as they continue to wear masks to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus.

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Demand for masks suitable for summer use is increasing in Japan and other parts of the world, with medical experts warning against risks such as breathing difficulties and dehydration when people wear masks in the hot and humid season.

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Companies from different industries that have never produced masks before are coming up with solutions, with their own expertise ranging from high-tech cool materials to interesting ideas like putting refrigerant packs inside masks.

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Mizuno Corp in late May started sales of face masks made with a soft stretch tricot material that is used for its swimsuits and wear for track and field athletics.

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By using the material, the repeatedly washable mask can fit the face with less stress and help prevent splash infections, the sportswear maker said.

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The product -- which costs 935 yen including tax -- gained strong popularity, with 20,000 pieces sold on its first online sales day.

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Yonex Co, a maker of equipment for badminton, tennis and other sports, will sell masks made with its "Very Cool" material containing xylitol from early July.

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Xylitol absorbs heat, responding to sweat, and the material is used for Yonex's wear for the Japan badminton national team, as well as professional tennis players.

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"As people spend more time wearing masks against the coronavirus, we hope our technology will enable users to keep cool during hot weather, even if only a little bit," a Yonex spokeswoman told Kyodo News.

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The company plans to sell the mask at 840 yen before tax. The length of the string of the quick-drying and antimicrobial mask can be adjusted.

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Fast Retailing Co, operator of the Uniqlo chain, plans to start selling face masks this summer featuring a highly breathable and fast-drying material used for its popular AIRism underwear products that are cool and dry quickly.

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A Fast Retailing spokeswoman said the date of the debut of the mask and its price will be announced once they are determined.

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Chairman and CEO Tadashi Yanai earlier denied the firm would enter the mask market, saying it will focus on its main business of making clothing. But it has decided to take advantage of the growing customer demand for masks.

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Various other companies are actively entering the summer mask market after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe fully lifted a state of emergency over the pneumonia-causing virus on May 25.

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Abe declared the emergency in April, urging citizens to stay at home and businesses to suspend or shorten opening hours in an effort to prevent the virus from spreading.

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While economic and social activities have gradually resumed, the government is calling on people to continue wearing face masks against a possible second wave of a virus outbreak.

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The request has raised concerns about the use of masks in hot weather, partly because the number of people who die or are taken to hospitals due to heat-related conditions has increased in Japan in recent years.

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The Japanese Association for Acute Medicine, a major medical group with over 10,000 members, has called on people to drink water at regular intervals and remove face masks as appropriate, as wearing them could increase both heart and breathing rates.

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Knit Waizu, a knitwear maker based in Yamagata Prefecture, northeastern Japan, has put on sale cloth masks equipped with ice packs.

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The mask has two pockets to hold four refrigerant packs and can cool the user's face for one to two hours.

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The company earlier this year sold cloth masks that are cooled and sold in vending machines, but their coolness did not last for a long time. As a result, Knit Waizu launched a reformed version of the mask.

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"It's a mask that has never been seen before," said Knit Waizu executive Katsuyuki Goto. "Although it's not perfect, I hope people will use it as a measure against the heat."

“????????”Knit Waizu????????“????????????????????”

The new mask sells for 1,300 yen, including tax, in vending machines and online sales are also available. The mask can be used repeatedly if cooled in a freezer.

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