Fabric facemasks should also have three layers

KOTA KINABALU: Wearing of facemasks in public places is important in the efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19 more effectively.

Universiti Malaysia Sabah Occupational Safety and Health Centre director Prof Dr Khamisah Awang Luman said wearing a facemask will not only prevent a person from transmitting the virus through droplets from the nose and mouth, but also protects the wearer from the virus entering the respiratory system.

"Based on facts and clinical studies, Covid-19 can be transmitted from an infected individual to another individual through fluid or droplets, and tends to attack the respiratory system through the nose and mouth," she said during a Covid-19 health education sharing session.

"When an individual infected with Covid-19 speaks or coughs, larger splashes or droplets containing the virus will land on surfaces, while smaller droplets can spread further.

"Therefore, a facemask is very important as a barrier to prevent the splashes entering the nose and mouth, besides also acting to prevent the hands that are feared exposed to drops from the surface to hold their own nose and mouth.

"In other words, a facemask is very important as a protection or control over the cause of transmission."

Khamisah explained there are two types of facemasks available in the market – medical and non-medical facemasks.

"Generally, medical facemasks are disposable and have three layers – the outer layer is waterproof to prevent any droplets, the middle layer is a filter if small droplets penetrate the outer layer, and the inner layer absorbs water or droplets due to cough.

"Medical facemasks are usually worn by health workers, frontliners, people with symptoms of Covid-19 infection, high-risk people like senior citizens or those with immune system problems, as well as sick people," she said.

Non-medical facemasks, she said, are made of fabric and reusable provided they are washed with hot water and detergent.

"The World Health Organisation (WHO) also recommends that fabric facemasks should have the same feature as the medical ones which is to have three layers."

She said the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (Dosh) is an agency responsible to ensure all facemasks sold commercially in shops comply with the minimum standards set by WHO.

The Covid-19 health education series is broadcast live on UMS' official Facebook page, at 10am, every Thursday.