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Concerning COVID-19

COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020-2023

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11-16-2020

## How Should We Respond to Evidence Against Wearing Masks?

Cedarville University

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## CONCERNING COVID: HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO EVIDENCE AGAINST WEARING MASKS?

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November 16, 2020 |



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This week's question is perhaps the most controversial topic of the pandemic. Despite the controversy, it's an important question to consider.

Question: *We've heard there is conflicting evidence that would counter this recommendation. What is that evidence? And how should we respond?*

Answer:

Masks **do not completely stop** the spread of COVID-19. They are simply **one more protective factor used to decrease the risk of spreading or contracting the illness**. It is important to remember while masks are a hot topic, they are **not the only prevention method** we should be using. Good hand washing is useful for staying healthy and is something healthcare providers have been recommending long before COVID-19. Keeping the environment clean can be another important factor to staying healthy with any transmittable infection. None of these interventions are 100% foolproof or effective, we use them because even though people still get sick, masks, hand washing, and a cleaner environment may lower the number of people who do fall ill.

Masks are recommended to **help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in public settings**. Evidence has shown a primary way the virus is transmitted is through respiratory droplets (you know little tiny drops of moisture which naturally happen and now have a super small germ in them) coming from the mouth or nose of an infected individual through talking, coughing, or sneezing. Masks are a **barrier to prevent or reduce the number of droplets** from an asymptomatic individual (a person who does not know they are sick) from traveling through the air and contacting other people (CDC, 2020). While mask wearing alone is not guaranteed to prevent spread, it is **still recommended because it may stop some droplets from circulating in the air** where others can breathe or touch them introducing the virus into their body (WHO, 2020).

Since the role of the mask is to act as a barrier, research has been done to test the effectiveness of different types of material to filter out droplets. These studies show that while **household fabrics are not nearly as effective as disposable medical masks in blocking the droplets, they still block** an average of >70% (Aydin, 2020). When these fabrics are used to make double-layered masks, the blocking efficiency increases to 94%, compared to 98-99% for disposable medical masks (Clase et al., 2020). This suggests that while no mask perfectly prevents the spread of COVID-19, they can still play a role in decreasing the risk.

If a portion of those droplets do escape and enter someone else's system, they **will have a much lower viral load** (number of virus germs), because less of the virus is in their blood. This could result in more mild symptoms because their body can fight it off more easily (Gandhi, 2020). There is some evidence that suggests this to be true, however, research is still being conducted as it is a new idea. Considering this information may be especially important if you are around people who are vulnerable like the elderly and those with immune systems not working the best.

So far, **there does not seem to be good, solid evidence against wearing masks**. However, it is important to do individual research for both sides of the argument in order to make the best decision for you and your family.

Wearing a mask is just **one of many methods to protect yourself and others from COVID-19**. When wearing a mask, whether by choice or to follow the rules, consider it an opportunity to count others as more significant than yourselves. Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves." Matthew 22:36-40, "36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Research:

Aydin O; Emon B; Cheng S; Hong L; Chamorro LP; Saif MTA;. (2020, August 11). Performance of fabrics for home-made masks against the spread of COVID-19 through droplets: A quantitative mechanistic study. Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32835043/>

Clase, C., Fu, E., Joseph, M., Beale, R., Dolovich, M., Jardine, M., . . . Carrero, J. (2020, September 15). Cloth Masks May Prevent Transmission of COVID-19: An Evidence-Based, Risk-Based Approach. Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7277485/>

COVID-19: Considerations for Wearing Masks. (2020). Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

Gandhi, M., Author Affiliations From the Center for AIDS Research, Others, P., J. H. Beigel and Others, & Editors, T. (2020, October 28). Facial Masking for Covid-19 – Potential for "Variolation" as We Await a Vaccine: NEJM. Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2026913>

MD, K. (2020, June 17). Mask Hysteria: Are We Going Too Far? Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://www.medpagetoday.com/Infectiousdisease/covid19/87120>

When and how to use masks. (2020). Retrieved November 04, 2020, from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

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### 6 Comments

Jill says:

[November 16, 2020 at 7:21 am](#)

Thank you for the good information!!

Jason Dundas says:

[November 16, 2020 at 6:17 am](#)

Please also keep in mind that a heavily used or soiled mask may be worse than no mask at all. In fact it is likely worse than no mask at all. Mask usage is by no means a panacea, and improper usage can result in respiratory infections.

Sarah says:

[November 16, 2020 at 10:24 am](#)

Great reminder! Regularly cleaning your masks is important.

Anonymous says:

[November 16, 2020 at 5:31 am](#)

The CDC has also stated that the eyes are another port of entry for the virus. What's going to happen now? Are you going to make the students wear eye coverings? Why not? You would be contradicting yourself if you didn't. Please, if you're going to implement a rule, implement the whole thing, and not bits and pieces to satisfy your mind.

Sarah says:

[November 16, 2020 at 10:22 am](#)

Thank you for your comment. Please pray for wisdom for the University leaders as we seek to navigate the pandemic well.

Alan says:

[November 17, 2020 at 1:14 am](#)

As this well written article says, masks reduce the droplets from the source of the virus. They are largely protecting others from an infected person, ie. port of EXIT. Your comment was "port of entry." Goggles do protect from possible exposure of droplets in the air. Masks cover port of exit and goggle protect port of entry... not the same. The school's policy does not contradict itself.

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