

STANDARD DEVIATIONS: The Cover-Up

Greetings,



“Just how long do you expect this plague to go on?”

Can face masks help slow the spread of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19?

Yes. Face masks combined with other preventive measures, such as getting vaccinated, frequent hand-washing and physical distancing, can help slow the spread of the virus.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends fabric masks for the general public. People who haven't been fully vaccinated should continue to wear face masks in indoor public places and outdoors where there is a high risk of COVID-19 transmission, such as crowded events or large gatherings. The CDC says that N95 masks should be reserved for health care providers.



Proper use, storage and cleaning of masks also affects how well they protect you. Follow these steps for putting on and taking off your mask:

- Wash or sanitize your hands before and after putting on your mask.
- Place your mask over your mouth and nose and chin.
- Tie it behind your head or use ear loops. Make sure it's snug.
- Don't touch your mask while wearing it.
- If you accidentally touch your mask, wash or sanitize your hands.
- If your mask becomes wet or dirty, switch to a clean one. Put the used mask in a sealable bag until you can get rid of it or wash it.
- Remove the mask by untying it or lifting off the ear loops without touching the front of the mask or your face.
- Wash your hands immediately after removing your mask.
- Regularly wash cloth masks in the washing machine or by hand. (They can be washed along with other laundry.)

And don't forget these precautions:

- Don't put masks on anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious or otherwise unable to remove the mask without help.
- Don't put masks on children under 2 years of age.
- Don't use face masks as a substitute for physical distancing.

What about face shields?

The CDC doesn't recommend using face shields instead of masks because it's unclear how much protection shields provide. However, wearing a face mask may not be possible in every situation. If you must use a face shield instead of a mask, choose one that wraps around the sides of your face and extends below your chin.

Do you still need to wear a facemask after you're fully vaccinated?

After you're fully vaccinated, the CDC recommends that it's ok not to wear a mask except where required by a rule or law. *However*, if you are in an area with a high number of new COVID-19 cases in the last week, the CDC recommends wearing a mask indoors in public and outdoors in crowded areas or when you are in close contact with unvaccinated people. If you are fully vaccinated and have a condition or are taking medications that weaken your immune system, you may need to keep wearing a mask.

In the U.S., everyone also needs to wear a mask while on planes, buses, trains and other forms of public transportation.



When this shindig started we suddenly found that supply chains for many medical and laboratory supplies were disrupted. This caused us to throw away the term “disposable” for a lot of stuff that was meant to be worn once and, well, thrown away – like masks. It’s important to replace used or soiled PPE whenever it is compromised, or to sanitize the products we reuse, when necessary.

Expect the guidance to change. Variants of concern, levels of local transmission, and a growing base of understanding will shape the way our masks are made, worn, and handled. It is likely that mask wearing will become much more ubiquitous in the future. Our understanding and behaviors must evolve to adjust to this new paradigm.

Have a great week and be safe,

Bryan

