

ADVERTORIAL

COVID-19 | STAY SAFE

WELLMED CARES

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My Fellow Americans,

I see it every day. Americans vigilantly wearing masks. Still, I am surprised by the number of people who choose not to wear a mask. In talking to people, it is clear there's a lot of confusion. Many aren't sure about when and where to wear a mask and who benefits from it.

Let's first discuss who benefits. Most people believe that when they wear a mask, they're protecting themselves. That is not true. **By wearing a mask, you are protecting others from COVID-19.** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 40% of infections are from people who are asymptomatic¹, meaning they show no signs of infection. The CDC also reports an increasing amount of evidence that shows cloth face coverings prevent infected people from spreading to others.²

Another reason some may not wear a mask is confusion about when and where to wear them. Back in February, health officials instructed people not to wear masks. At that time, the highly contagious nature of COVID-19 was not fully understood. They also wanted to make sure masks were available for first responders, doctors, nurses and medical staff on the front lines of the pandemic.

That was then. Here's some of what we know today about COVID-19:

- It spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when someone coughs, sneezes or talks.
- It may also spread by touching infected surfaces, but is rare.
- It can spread without the carrier showing any symptoms.
- The virus has an incubation period up to 14 days.
- Carriers may be most contagious 48 hours before displaying any symptoms.³

¹[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/planning-scenarios.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/planning-scenarios.html)

²CDC Editorial in JAMA: Brooks JT, Butler JC, Redfield RR. Time for universal masking and prevention of transmission of SARS-CoV-2. JAMA. Published online July 14, 2020. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.13107 jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/10.1001/jama.2020.13107

³[health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-youve-been-exposed-to-the-coronavirus](https://www.health.harvard.edu/diseases-and-conditions/if-youve-been-exposed-to-the-coronavirus)

⁴[cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html)

As we learn more about this virus, the guidance may continue to change. It's the nature of science and the study of infectious diseases. You learn over time with testing. We will continue to learn and understand more about COVID-19 over the coming months and years. Until a vaccine is discovered and more effective treatments developed, we must do the things we know will help to slow the spread, like wearing a mask.

The CDC recommends all individuals two years and older wear a mask in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household, especially when social distancing is difficult to maintain.⁴ Children younger than two or anyone who has trouble breathing should not wear a mask and should instead avoid contact with the public.

We are living in troubling, even frustrating times. I understand how confusing it can be to hear one set of instructions, only later to be told something different. For some, this can lead to mistrust. But speaking as a medical doctor, you must trust that the medical experts are doing all that they can night and day to protect you and keep you safe from harm.

Let's protect one another by wearing a mask in public. You could be saving the life of a friend, family member, neighbor, co-worker, student, teacher, or a first responder.

WellMed CARES. When you wear a mask, you show that you care.



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STAY SAFE, SOCIAL DISTANCE

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Editor's note: Due to an error in the editing process, last week's article incorrectly stated the age when children should begin receiving flu shots. The CDC recommends children 6 months and older should receive flu shots.