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Your Practical, Satirical Guide to the Safest and Silliest Face Masks

By A.J. Smuskiewicz, on April 20th, 2020



In the early 1990s, I worked as a biologist in a biochemical laboratory that developed sterilization cycles for medical instruments. We worked with dangerous chemicals, such as the carcinogen ethylene oxide, and various bacteria and viruses. To protect ourselves from breathing in those chemicals and microorganisms, we each had to wear a full-face, silicone respirator with double HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters. The silicone mask provided an air-tight seal against the skin around the nose and chin, the filters blocked gaseous chemicals and airborne viruses and bacteria from entering the nose or mouth, and the clear plastic face shield protected the eyes and the rest of the face. In order for the respirator to function effectively, you could not have any facial hair (I had to shave my beard for that job), the device had to be custom-fitted and tested on each individual, you needed special training on its use and maintenance, and you had to undergo a medical examination to make sure the device would not worsen any existing health conditions, such as respiratory or blood pressure problems.

That is the only way to almost guarantee full protection against taking in nasty particles and viruses through the orifices of your head—such as the coronavirus (SARS CoV-2).

Even those professional-quality, personally fitted N95 masks/respirators (manufactured according to standards of the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health)—the kind that are used by medical personnel—do not block 100% of viruses. The 95 in the name stands for 95% of tiny (0.3 micron) particles. Some respirators have a P100 rating—meaning that they supposedly block 99.9% of 0.3-micron particles. But you should know that the coronavirus is even smaller than that—with an average size of 0.1 micron. It can get inside and outside of those respirators. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't want you wearing them, anyway, because it says they are needed by healthcare personnel.

Nevertheless, if you are really paranoid and want to do something relatively meaningful to prevent yourself from getting the coronavirus, buy a high-quality N95 respirator or a full-face, silicone respirator with double HEPA filters, if you can find them, and learn how to use them correctly. Make sure you don't have an underlying health condition that would be aggravated by the respirator, and make sure that you know how to take care of the respirator. Also, don't forget your gloves and hand sanitizer. But if you are really REALLY paranoid, maybe you should buy an entire hazmat suit with a self-contained breathing apparatus and oxygen tank. Yeah, that would be your safest option. And also be sure to bathe every day in isopropyl alcohol (or, better yet, ethyl alcohol) and bleach. That'll definitely kill any of those lingering little bugs!

Fiber and cloth face masks—symbol of the pandemic

Of course, when you go to the grocery store or the few other “essential” businesses that the government has allowed to remain open, you don't see many people walking around with high-quality N95 or silicone, HEPA-filter respirators. But you do see a lot of people wearing common fiber or cloth face masks, surgical masks, bandanas, and other simple coverings over their nose and mouth. More than anything else, these face coverings have become the symbol of the coronavirus pandemic. More and more state governors are (unconstitutionally) requiring members of the public to wear these masks, implying that they will ensure your safety whenever you are bold enough to venture out among your fellow human beings. And you are threatened with getting arrested by the police if you do not comply. The media frequently preaches to us that we have to wear these face coverings if we are responsible citizens. What the media and political pontificators and petty tyrants fail to tell you is that these face masks do virtually nothing to stop the viruses.

The surgical masks are designed primarily to block large splashes of blood and other fluids that may be contaminated with pathogenic microbes and transmitted during medical procedures. They are not made for blocking airborne viruses. The common, disposable fiber or cloth masks are meant to block large amounts of dust and particles from being breathed in during such work as construction, woodworking, spray painting, and machinery work. They are not for viruses. Bandanas are best worn by gang members and cowboys.

In addition to not blocking the entry or exit of viruses, these common face coverings are dangerous because they can do much more harm than good. Surgeon General Jerome Adams used to tell the public this truth—before changing his tune to that of the official government song. Common sense tells you that these masks are problematic. Think about it...

It is more difficult to breathe when you are wearing these masks. So you tend to breathe more deeply and heavily and frequently, increasing the flow of air—and any potential viruses—into your face. The heavier breathing can aggravate underlying health problems, especially if you have respiratory or circulatory conditions. Most people who wear these masks do not dispose of them after each shopping trip. They reuse them over and over. The reused masks collect body fluids, such as nasal drippings, saliva, and sweat, possibly contaminated with viruses or other germs. Wearing and handling these masks increases your risk of pathogen exposure. You might think that you are staying safe, keeping other people safe, and being a good, obedient citizen by wearing a face mask, but you simply have a false sense of security from the dreaded plague. Any virus that wants to get you as bad as this virus wants to get you (according to “all the experts”) is gonna get you anyway. Viruses are very tiny, and they are very clever.

“The mask will keep us safe,” so say we all

This idea that the face mask will keep us safe from all harm—I see it every time I go to the grocery store, liquor store, or any other place that is still open. People have really bought into it. These places now look more like hospitals or science laboratories than stores. Most people—workers and customers—are wearing face masks. And there are big sheets of plastic separating you from the cashier, and there are colored marks on the floor telling you where to stand. But I am always one of the few people not wearing a mask. The Supreme Leader of Illinois, Pritzker, has not yet mandated it. People think—or hope—they are safe with the mask, and they look at me like I’m a threatening monster of some kind. But I don’t worry about these unknowledgeable people, and I don’t worry about the virus either.

I was at the deli counter at the grocery store last week, and I got scolded by the woman behind the counter when I stepped over the blue line to tell her that I wanted the eight-piece chicken dinner. The woman, a short chubby middle-aged lady, said, “Stand behind the line, sir. You stay safe, and I stay safe.” She sounded like a well programmed robot. That got me mad, and I wanted to tell her, “You won’t stay safe if I walk behind this counter and kick your butt.” But then I thought that would not be very gentlemanly of me, and besides, she was probably just doing what she had to do to keep her job. So, instead I shouted to her across the proper social distance, “I have a background in biology, and I can assure you that you have nothing to worry about with the virus. This is all way overblown.” But I could tell I was wasting my voice on the sad little lady. Besides, the other customers waiting at the deli were staring at me like I was a serious threat to the established order. I became worried that security guards would come and escort me out of the store—without my chicken dinner. So I said no more.

As I indicated in a previous essay, I believe that this coronavirus pandemic amounts to little more than fear and hysteria. The government is stoking and exploiting your fear in order to control you. Governors and other politicians want you to think that they are doing something beneficial for you, when all they are really doing is increasing their power over your life. Be good. Stay home. Stay away from other people. If you have to go out to fend off starvation, wear a mask. Obey us, and we will keep you safe. We will take care of you. You belong to us. You are government property.

When I see people wearing masks, I see surrender to ignorance, fear, and fascism. Your mask is a mark of shame—a sign that you are letting the government control your behavior, rather than living and thinking for yourself, rather than standing up for the timeless American values of freedom and liberty.

Silly masks

Furthermore—look at yourself in the mirror. You and your face mask. You look very silly. Do you want to look silly? Well, then allow me to share the following suggestions for face masks. My ideas for face masks will keep you just as safe as the masks you are currently using. But they will be better, because they will clearly show everyone what a silly person you are for believing the government propaganda.

- Use a bra for a mask. Put one cup over your mouth and nose, and let the other cup dangle below your chin. Multiple colors and styles are available. Some are very sexy.
- Put a pair of men’s underwear (classic briefs with front opening) over your head, upside down. If you put the rear end forward, it would probably be safer. But the front end will allow for the passage of a straw should you get thirsty.
- If you are fortunate enough to find a nice big package of toilet paper or paper towels, cut a slit through the plastic wrapper, carefully remove the paper products so as to not rip the wrapper, and then wear the wrapper over your head and shoulders. This makes for a nice big covering for you. Be sure to position a clear area over your eyes (not the Brawny man or Charmin bears).
- Put a plastic bucket over your head, with two round cut-outs for your eyes. Or a lamp shade.
- Wrap your whole head tightly in Saran plastic wrap and hold your breath. (This might actually be the safest possible way to avoid getting the virus.)
- Put one of those dog cone collars around your neck, facing upward.

- Wear the Halloween mask of your choosing. To show your strength and resolve in defeating the coronavirus, Superman, Wonder Woman, or Captain America might be good choices.

Well, you get the idea. I'm sure you can think of your own, possibly sillier face masks. Get creative and have fun. What else have you got to do? You're not working, and you can't go anywhere.

But seriously, folks...

You can wear whatever mask you want to wear. But I wear no mask. Why? Because I know that my chance of getting seriously sick from this virus is roughly the same as it is from the regular influenza viruses. I never get sick from them, and I never get the flu shots either. I always suspected this similarity, but it is becoming increasingly obvious as the data and statistics come in. The clear truth has been gradually revealed, despite the best efforts of the media and government to confuse you. The extent of the spreading of the coronavirus has been greatly exaggerated. The number of serious sicknesses caused by the virus has been wildly inflated. The death rate of COVID-19 is roughly the same as that of influenza, and the total number of deaths caused by SARS-CoV-2 this year will be almost the same as that caused by the average flu virus each year—despite the lack of a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2.

So, you have to ask yourself these questions: Have you ever worn a face mask to try to stop the flu? No? Then why are you wearing a face mask now to try to stop the virus? Why are you joining in with the irrational mass hysteria?

I am glad to see that public protests are FINALLY taking place and spreading across the country. Increasing numbers of people are getting wise. They have had enough of masks, social distancing, closed businesses, and no income. They see the numbers coming in. They see the data showing that this whole hyped-up thing is not substantially different from the flu—regardless of how the “experts,” like Fauci, keep twisting the facts to suit their own agendas.

Finally, speaking of bras, I have a suggestion for the enlightened new groups of protestors. Be like the feminists of the 1970s—the ones who burned their bras in public rallies. But instead of burning bras, burn those silly little face masks.

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