

Face Masks

Do I need to wear one if I'm healthy?

I hate wearing a face mask. I also hate seat belts, helmets, and airplane seats in the “upright and locked” position – but I use them. Even more than my hatred of hard-to-breath-through face masks, I hate the thought of giving a potentially deadly virus to one of my patients.

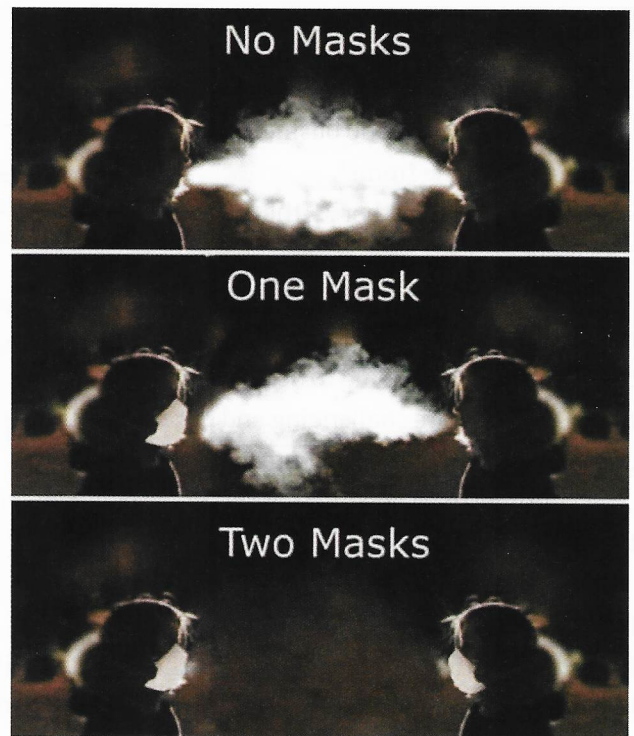
As a surgeon, I've worn a face mask (and other uncomfortable gear) in the operating room my entire career but wearing a covering over my face in the exam room with patients is new and terrible. And for reasons that are not entirely clear to me, face mask wearing has become a political issue. This virus really doesn't care

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what political party you follow, it simply does its thing like every other virus we've dealt with in medicine over the last few thousand years (smallpox, mumps, rubella, measles, chicken pox, HIV, Ebola, etc). These viruses don't hate you. They don't think. Similar to viruses in your computer, human viruses just do what their code tells them to do – infect, reproduce, and make new viruses. Your sickness is just a “side effect” of having the virus in your body.

Humans have an amazing ability to solve complex medical problems. We've even completely eliminated

one horrible viral disease, smallpox, that killed over 300 million people just in the 1900s. We did this using science and modern medical techniques. As of August 1, 2020, there are 27 COVID-19 vaccines in human clinical trials. If our experience with this new virus is at all similar to the many others we've dealt with, we will eventually have an effective vaccine against COVID-19. In the meantime, because the virus most easily travels from person to person on the tiny moisture droplets that come out of our mouths when we talk and breath, wearing a mask and washing our hands, two very simply tasks, are the most effective treatments we have. Please remember, I'm not wearing MY mask to protect me. I'm wearing it to protect YOU from any virus that I may be breathing out. If you do the same, then we protect each other. Be well.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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