



PSA

Date: September 16, 2020
To: All Media
From: Stephanie Krell, PIO for Unified Command
Subject: **Study finds masks protect wearer and others**

The message around mask wearing thus far is that it protects others from the wearer. New research suggests that it has protective benefits for the wearer also, by cutting down on the dose of virus people take in.

That can result in a less serious case of COVID-19, and researchers believe more mask wearing may be one of the factors behind the lower death rates from the latest wave of infections in the U.S., according to an article by the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

Masks, depending on type, filter out a majority of viral particles, which can lead to a less severe infection if you do get one, according to Dr. Monica Gandhi, an infectious disease specialist at UCSF, who led the research. It was published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine.

The research paper suggests that mask wearing should be one of the most important pillars of controlling COVID-19.

The research shows that public health messaging on wearing masks can appeal to more than altruism. "If you think something's going to help you or your family, you are going to do it more than if you think you're helping others," Gandhi said in the UCSF article, found here at <https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/07/418181/one-more-reason-wear-mask-youll-get-less-sick-covid-19>.

Researchers suspect the wider use of masks may be one reason for lower death rates from the latest wave of COVID-19 infections, as well as more testing, younger patients and better treatments.

The research noted that in countries where mask wearing was already commonplace, like Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, rates of severe illness and death have remained comparatively low.

The concept of a viral dose determining the degree of illness is not new. A small number of viral particles are more likely to be defeated by the immune system before they can proliferate, Gandhi said.

In a hamster study, a surgical mask partition between the cages of infected and uninfected hamsters significantly cut COVID-19 transmission. Fewer hamsters caught the virus and those that did showed milder symptoms.

Two outbreaks at food processing plants where masking was required – including one in Oregon – showed 95 percent of cases of COVID-19 were asymptomatic.

Gandhi said milder infections would ease the burden on the health care system, save lives and even nudge the nation closer to herd immunity before a vaccine becomes available.

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