

National Mask Mandate

12 million plus cases, and more than 254,000 Americans have lost their lives. Over these last eight months, the world has changed in every aspect. School, life, sports, and a new controversial topic. Should masks be a national mandate? The simple task has now been turned into a controversy. Saving and protecting your fellow American, has now been politicized. What is the real answer though? Does wearing a mask save lives, or is it unconstitutional? I will be discussing why there should be a national mask mandate.

In order to stop this pandemic, we must have a national mandate as well as an effective vaccine. As of right now, masks are a sure tool to stop the spread of viruses, especially respiratory illnesses. Masks have been used pre pandemic and they have worked. Surgeons preventatively wear masks to protect patients from foreign bacteria. Medical workers also wear masks to protect fragile and immunocompromised patients from potential exposures. Masks are indeed effective and should be required nationally.

Statistics show that masks indeed help stop the spread of the virus. Now that we are in such a “dark” period, wearing a mask is one of the few ways of protection right now. The University of California San Francisco published an article saying this, “Masks may be more effective as a “source control” because they can prevent larger expelled droplets from evaporating into smaller droplets that can travel farther.” Wearing masks can stop these small droplets from passing through the mask. PNAS has found masks greatly reduced infections in two hot spots early on in the pandemic. “This protective measure alone significantly reduced the number of infections, that is, by over 75,000 in Italy from April 6 to May 9 and over 66,000 in New York City from April 17 to May 9.” These masks are designed to help stop the spread of any virus, including COVID-19.

When the majority of the population wears a mask, the efficacy goes up as well as decreasing cases. Let's say for example, an individual has a mask on and the other does not, the chances of getting the virus may be greater. If two individuals don't wear a mask, there is a great chance the one who has the virus will infect the other. If both infected and non-infected individuals were to wear a mask, chances are very low of contracting the virus. In 2006 and 2007, during the influenza season in New South Wales and Sydney, Australia, the CDC conducted a study showing how effective masks are indoors. During this study, the control group were people who did not wear a mask. "We recruited 290 adults from 145 families; 47 households (94 enrolled adults and 180 children) were randomized to the surgical mask group, 46 (92 enrolled adults and 172 children) to the P2 mask group, and 52 (104 enrolled adults and 192 children) to the no-mask (control) group." During this study however, each participant displayed a different behavior, just like right now. Many decided to wear their mask, "most or all" of the time, and many others decided to wear the masks "rarely or never." In the control group, "38 out of 50 contracted the virus." Adding up to 76%. Those who wore the medical mask had, "32 out of 47 contracting the virus." Equalling 68%. The individuals who wore the P2 masks(N-95), "33 out of 46 contracted the flu." Totaling up to 72%". Wearing a mask shows greatly it will lower the chance of contracting any respiratory illness. If the majority of participants wore masks, the numbers would be significantly lower.

Many people across the world believe that wearing a mask interferes with breathing. Wearing a mask seems difficult to breath in but it doesn't interfere with our oxygen levels. No matter how long you wear the masks you are oxygenating just fine. Jonathan Parsons, MD at The Ohio State University states, "As a pulmonologist—a doctor who specializes in the respiratory system—I can assure you that behind that mask, your breathing is fine. You're getting all the

oxygen you need, and your carbon dioxide levels aren't rising." Slowing down your breathing is a great strategy to feel more "comfortable" and to ease a little bit of the anxiety.

Wearing masks is one of the best ways of prophylaxis against COVID-19. Wearing masks correctly, greatly reduces the positivity in the community, and decreases the rate of spread nationally. If the federal government urges each state to mandate mask wearing, many lives could be saved in the future. The more lives we are able to save, the more holidays families are able to spend together, not in hospital beds fighting for their lives. I believe a national mask mandate would shorten this pandemic. Thank you and stay safe.

Resources

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