

COVID-19 mythbusting questions & answers

8/19/2020



**Lorain County
Public Health**

For the Health of Us All

Q: If you already had COVID-19, can you get it again?

A: We do not know yet ([CDC](#)). If you already had COVID-19, continue to wash your hands, wear a face covering in public, and stay home if you don't feel well.

Q: If the person I'm talking to is already wearing a mask, do I really need to wear one?

A: A mask may not protect the wearer, but it may keep the wearer from spreading the virus to others ([CDC](#)). That means that you should wear a mask in order to protect the person you're talking to.

Q: Can't you protect yourself from COVID-19 with supplements, diet, exercise and mindfulness?

A: While no foods or dietary supplements can prevent or cure COVID-19 infection, healthy diets are important for supporting immune systems. Good nutrition can also reduce the likelihood of developing other health problems, including obesity, heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer ([WHO](#)). Many people take vitamin C, vitamin D, zinc, green tea or echinacea to boost their immune systems. While these supplements might affect your immune function, research hasn't shown that they can prevent you from getting sick. The supplement colloidal silver, which has been marketed as a COVID-19 treatment, isn't considered safe or effective for treating any disease ([Mayo Clinic](#)).

Q: Why do cases keep going up weeks after the mask mandate went into effect?

A: Cases go up because of a variety of reasons. Now that more people do have an availability to get tested, more tests causes the rate to go up. There is also more exposure going on because of how we have opened up a little bit, and a lot of that is coming from family gatherings and things like that where people are letting their guard down and often not wearing masks ([Dave Covell, MPH, RS, LCPH Health Commissioner](#)).

Q: Why can't it be a person's choice whether or not to wear a mask?

A: People who have COVID-19, sometimes without showing any symptoms, can pass the disease on to other people without knowing it. If COVID-19 cases spike, healthcare providers could become overwhelmed and run out of supplies to protect themselves and treat patients — not just COVID-19 patients, but also others ([ODH](#)). The state mandated masks to protect as many people as possible, just like it has passed other laws and mandates to protect the public.

Q: Why haven't we worn face masks for the flu in years past?

A: Even before COVID-19, it was common for doctors' offices and other locations to ask people who were sick with the flu to wear a mask (LCPH protocol). COVID-19 is more contagious than the flu ([CDC](#)), and people who don't feel sick may carry and spread COVID-19 to others ([CDC](#)). That's why healthy people are also asked to wear masks.

Q: With all of the sanitizing, won't my immune system get weaker because it's not getting exposed to normal germs?

A: By the time you are an adult, you've already spent years being exposed to many types of bacteria and viruses. You've created a robust immune system that can respond to these microbes. Your immune system "remembers" viral and bacterial markers, and as soon as one of these markers shows up, your body starts making antibodies to destroy that intruder. Coming into contact with germs spurs an immune response, but it doesn't do anything to make your immune system stronger ([MIT](#)).

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Q: I sneezed with a mask on, and the sneeze went through the mask and blew the straw paper cover I had on the table. Does a mask even block anything?

A: The effectiveness of your mask depends on a few different factors. Make sure it...

- fits snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- completely covers the nose and mouth
- is secured with ties or ear loops
- includes multiple layers of fabric
- allows for breathing without restriction
- can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

([CDC](#))

Q: Why can't we make only sick people wear a mask? Why should I wear one?

A: Researchers have found that the amount of live virus in the nose and throat drops significantly soon after COVID-19 symptoms develop ([CDC](#)). That means you can spread COVID-19 to others even if you don't feel sick, which is why you should wear a mask so others don't breathe in anything you've breathed out.

Q: What are students who can't afford masks (or even laundry) supposed to do?

A: Different school districts have different solutions for keeping students as safe as possible when returning to school. Some examples:

- Virtual school only
- Giving masks to students that can't afford them
- Connecting students with free mask resources

Dirty masks can go in the laundry, or check the [CDC's guidance for washing masks by hand](#).

Q: What if my mask (food, jacket, whatever) gets COVID-19 on it?

A: COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object (like a mask, phone, tabletop, etc.) that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about how this virus spreads ([CDC](#)).

To protect yourself, wash hands frequently and routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces. Masks can get cleaned in the regular laundry. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 by food ([FDA](#)).

Q: Is it really "good enough" to wash a mask with the rest of the laundry? If this virus is so threatening why are people just letting them hang out in the laundry?

A: COVID-19 mainly spreads through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks - not so much through touching objects (including masks) ([CDC](#)). Normal soap kills COVID-19 because there's a fatty layer around the virus. The soap breaks the fatty layer and kills the virus (read an [explanation](#) or [watch a video](#)).

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Q: Am I a hypochondriac germophobe if I wear a mask?

A: No - a mask may not protect the wearer, but it may keep the wearer from spreading the virus to others ([CDC](#)). By wearing a mask, you're being kind. If you're having obsessive thoughts or intense anxiety about germs, COVID-19, or any other issues, get connected to resources through the [Mental Health, Addiction and Recovery Services \(MHARS\) Board of Lorain County](#).

Q: Isn't it counterproductive to take off your mask, stuff it in your pocket or purse (getting it dirty), then putting it back on?

A: It's best to try to keep your mask as clean as possible. If you need to store your mask when going to the bathroom, taking a drink or eating...

- Place your mask on a clean paper towel. (Exterior of the mask facing down with the ties placed away from the inside), OR
- Store your mask in a clean paper bag.

([Duke University School of Medicine](#))

Q: There's such a low mortality rate, so why is COVID-19 such a big deal?

A: We're dealing with a new virus that does kill people. We're learning more about the true mortality rate and the CDC is keeping tabs on [forecasts of deaths](#). As of August 17, 2020, COVID-19 had killed 3,832 Ohioans. Looking at [Ohio's leading causes of death for 2017](#), these COVID-19 numbers would make the top 7 causes of death in Ohio - and 2020 isn't even over yet. Also as of August 17, 2020, COVID-19 had killed 74 Lorain County residents. Looking at Lorain County's leading causes of death for 2019, these COVID-19 numbers would make the top 8 causes of death in Lorain County. Preventing COVID-19 is also about preventing illness. There's still more to learn about the possible long term outcomes of the virus, such as lung damage.

Q: Can't you get sick from wearing a mask?

A: There's been some speculation on social media that wearing a mask can cause you to rebreathe the carbon dioxide you exhale and make you sick. While inhaling high levels of carbon dioxide is dangerous, this is very unlikely to happen from wearing a cloth face mask — especially if you're only wearing it for short periods of time. However, there are some people who shouldn't wear cloth masks. This includes kids under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or anyone who can't take the mask off without assistance ([Cleveland Clinic](#)).