

## Mask 101 with Kris Ehresmann Transcript

Hi. My name is Kris Ehresmann and then the director for infectious disease at the Minnesota Department of Health. And I'm gonna talk to you a little bit about why masks are important.

So the purpose of the mask is what we call source control. And what I mean by that is when someone is talking or even just breathing, they are expelling micro particles. And so if you are sick, those micro particles of saliva can contain virus. And so, by wearing a mask, you are trapping those particles and keeping them from spreading to the people around you.

There are lots of different types of masks that are available. Some have an elastic band like mine. They have can have a little metal so that it can pinch around your nose. There other types where you're tying them behind your head, all of those types of masks-- that that's great. And some people have chosen to wear bandannas, and that is just fine. Or if you have another cloth. If you have a religious headdress that you're able to pull to cover your mouth and nose when you're in public, that too is great. The goal, the purpose is to make sure that you've covered your nose and mouth, and as long as your nose and mouth are covered by cloth when you're out in public, that is what's most important.

These masks are really a valuable tool. They're not perfect. And that's why we continue to say that it's really important that you maintain social distance. So, the fact that I'm wearing a mask doesn't mean that I get be closer to the people around me. So, two people wearing a mask don't get to sit a foot apart. They still need to maintain social distancing as well. But we recognize that it's not always possible to social distance when you need to pass that person in the grocery aisle to get the pickles or you're in another enclosed space. Wearing a mask is double protection for those other people, in the instances when you cannot maintain six feet of social distance.

You know, we've been saying for many months now that people need to stay home when they're sick, and you may be thinking, "Well, I do that I would never go out if I was sick. Why do I need to wear a mask? I would always stay home if I was sick." But the challenge is, that as we've learned more about the virus that causes COVID, we've learned that people are infectious before they have symptoms, and in fact, that's a period when they are most infectious. So, you could be absolutely cautious and attentive to the fact that I would never go out if I had symptoms, but you may not have symptoms and still be infectious. So by wearing a mask, you're ensuring that you don't, inadvertently, expose someone to COVID before you might even know that you have it.

Some people have expressed concern that wearing a mask will somehow reduce their ability to get the necessary oxygen that they need. There is not data to suggest that that happens. We know that health care workers wear masks for an entire shift. For us to wear a mask while we're doing our errands, the brief times when we're out in public, is not a problem. I think the thing to keep in mind is -- the next time you take out your mask to put it on, remember that, wearing this mask could save someone's life.

Minnesota Department of Health  
Communications Office  
P.O. Box 64975  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975  
651-201-4989  
[health.communications@state.mn.us](mailto:health.communications@state.mn.us)  
[www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

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