

Do it for the Gram

By Kaj Linehan

Wearing a mask can keep you and others safe from COVID-19. COVID-19 affects your lungs, nose, throat, windpipe, sinuses, gastrointestinal tract, respiratory tract, and other organs. Symptoms for COVID-19 include coughing, fever, chills, congestion, fatigue, headaches, runny nose, difficulty breathing, nausea or vomiting. If we all work together to social distance, and most importantly wear masks as advised by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), we can get through the pandemic and back to normal life.

The first benefit of masks is that you keep yourself safe. After a few moments of discomfort, wearing a mask is as normal as wearing your clothes. According to the CDC, when you wear a mask, COVID-19 particles in the air are less likely to get into your nose and mouth. In addition to wearing a mask, a face shield can protect your eyes. Most of the particles people release into the air are microscopic and can stay in the air a long time!

The second benefit of masks is that you protect others if you're COVID-19 positive. Masks prevents COVID-19 particles from going into the surrounding air, and therefore, protects the most at-risk groups: senior citizens, infants, and people with underlying medical conditions. In other words, it protects your grandparents, baby cousins, and your friend with asthma.

The third benefit of masks is helping your community by lowering the COVID-19 transmission rate. A single person with COVID-19 infects 2 to 2.5 people. In 2019-2020, hospitals in China, Italy, Spain and New York City were overwhelmed with patients. Doctors and nurses made tough decisions regarding who got lifesaving care with the limited resources available. Wearing masks helps hospitals from being overwhelmed.

Don't forget the unexpected benefits of wearing a mask. Forgot to brush your teeth or ate garlic with your lunch? No one will notice. Part of a spy agency? Your mask and sunglasses will conceal your true identity. Make silly faces at inopportune times? Your mask has your back! The ultimate benefit of wearing masks for kids? Never having to smile for photos again!

Wearing a mask can keep you safe, keep others safe, and help your community. It takes everyone doing their part, so please wear a mask, and encourage your friends and family to wear them, too! Who knows, they might thank you when they forget to smile for the family photo.