

Use of cloth face coverings: Help slow the spread of COVID-19



**Manuel L.
Peralta Jr.**

During the last 30 days, there has been an alarming increase in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in many parts of this country. Many people have shared the opinion that this country was and is not ready for re-opening, and that there have been insufficient safeguards put in place to make sure that it is safe to step forward. Politics, however, is trumping the scientific and medical evidence.

Many are doubting the statistics being reported, suggesting that they are artificially inflated. Some support that opinion by stating that the current death rate does not relate to the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19, or that the current death rate supports a belief

that we are doing better. We are not, and until there is a vaccine or a cure, we are not ready to continue life as if the virus is not there.

The mere fact that there is a lag in the number of reported deaths does not mean that we are doing better. It shows that we may be testing more and learning earlier who has been infected. The virus works you over while your immune system fights back. Your efforts, in most cases, are aided by the efforts of hardworking health care professionals who learn more every day about how to help you through. A patient's fight for survival may continue for many weeks and sometimes months. In many cases, though, we are not able to prevent the disease from ravaging your system. The time between the discovery of an infection and the ultimate death of the patient may be longer than it was in February or March, when the discovery of an infection was revealed after the patient was admitted to the hospital for treatment.

As of this writing, there have been 12,977,429 worldwide cases, with 570,259 deaths attributed to COVID-19. The United States has reported 3,327,399 confirmed cases with 135,542 reported deaths.

The United States began to re-open partly at the insistence of the business community. The White House administration cast aside the opinions of the medical and scientific experts, favoring the opinions of business leaders instead. Recently, there was an animated discussion about returning our children to school in the fall. It is my opinion that we are not ready for that, and that we are putting the next generation in harm's way.

Some of the current tools to protect society from COVID-19

are social distancing, frequent hand-washing, disinfecting and the wearing of a face covering. If we employ all available recommendations, we will not stop the virus completely, but we will slow down its spread.

How have we done in our letter carrier craft? Between April 2 and April 8 (when we began to receive sporadic information from USPS), we averaged 10 new confirmed infections a day. Those numbers peaked at 23 per day at the end of April, then started a downward trend in June, where the seven-day period ending on June 11 revealed about seven discovered infections per day. During the seven-day period ending July 2, however, we again spiked, averaging more than 28 confirmed infections per day.

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advise that:

...Cloth face coverings are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the cloth face covering coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID 19, paired with emerging evidence from clinical and laboratory studies that shows cloth face coverings reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID 19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of cloth face coverings is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain...

Why has this recommendation caused conflict on the workroom floor and in society?

Be a hero—wear your mask. Do something for others and don't be selfish about the inconvenience that you may feel. Keep an eye a face covering on each other.