

NEWS

Miss. health experts debunk face mask myths swirling on social media



Debunking mask myths

By **C.J. LeMaster** | May 19, 2020 at 10:41 PM CDT - Updated May 20 at 7:57 AM

JACKSON, Miss. (WLBT) - Myths regarding face masks and whether they protect against the spread of coronavirus keep popping up on social media -- with some implying the public is more likely to get COVID-19 with a mask than without.

In an effort to share facts over fear, 3 On Your Side consulted with health care professionals to find out if any of those claims hold water.

One of the biggest allegations involved whether wearing face masks could lead to carbon dioxide poisoning.

Family medicine physician Dr. Emily Landrum said surgeons wear masks often throughout their work shifts, as well as those who have the flu -- if they're hospitalized -- for prolonged periods with no problems.

"As long as your mask is breathable, I think that risk of carbon dioxide poisoning, for example, is very low," Landrum said.

The conspiracy theory, which has circulated across various social media platforms, has no scientific evidence to back up its claim.

Other posts suggest neither cloth masks nor surgical ones protect against coronavirus infection at all.

"If two parties in a scenario are wearing a mask, then that reduces your risk of getting coronavirus down to less than two percent as opposed to if one person is wearing a mask and the other person is not, then that risk is much higher, depending on which individual has coronavirus, sometimes up to 70 percent or higher," Landrum said.

State Health Officer Dr. Thomas Dobbs agrees with that sentiment.

"One of the most important reasons [to wear a mask] is because people don't know they're infectious. Even if they have no symptoms, they're totally contaminating the air around them."

Landrum also took issue with the myth that you can keep re-infecting yourself by keeping a mask on.

"Just because you have the mask on and it's keeping those viral particles from going out into the air, that doesn't necessarily mean that you're just breathing those back in and increasing your chance of becoming sicker or re-infecting yourself, per se."

Health experts like Landrum agree you should follow proper procedures when taking the mask off, however, and wash your hands afterward.

It also helps to wear it correctly.

During Tuesday's briefing with Gov. Tate Reeves, Dobbs demonstrated the wrong way to wear a face mask, with his nose poking out of the top.

"I see a lot of this. I'm sure y'all do, too, so please cover your mouth and your nose," Dobbs said. "It's really an easy thing to do. I just wish people would take it seriously."

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