

WHY YOU SHOULD STILL WEAR A MASK

IN 2024:
a comprehensive guide to (Long) COVID, masking, disability justice, and more!

DISABILITY, GENDER, RACE & QUEERNESS: OUR LIBERATION IS CONNECTED

Consider... Who has the **privilege** of working from home? Who can **afford** tools such as masks and rapid tests? Who can afford to take **time off from work**? Who is more likely to be **believed** and given proper treatment by medical providers? Who is more likely to live or work in **high-risk, crowded environments**?

In a Nov. 2023 poll, **72% of Black respondents said they were taking COVID precautions** (avoiding large gatherings, travel, or indoor dining; masking in crowded places; taking a COVID test), while **only 39% of white respondents said they were taking any of these same precautions**.¹⁷ Data also shows that “white people feared COVID less after learning other races were hit hardest.”¹⁸

Bisexual, trans, disabled, Black and Hispanic adults are the groups experiencing the **highest rates of Long COVID**.^{19,20,21} **Women** are significantly more likely than men to experience Long COVID.¹⁹ And **infants (<1 yr)** often have the **highest COVID ICU rates** among all age groups.²²

ALL of us suffer because our healthcare system has abandoned masking/protecting its patients altogether. The government has shown its disregard for queer lives during the (ongoing) AIDS epidemic, and **history is repeating itself**. Queer, trans, Black, disabled lives are lives **worth living** and **worth protecting**! Mask up!

TLDR: PUBLIC HEALTH IS A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. WEARING A MASK IS AN ACT OF COMMUNITY CARE & RESISTANCE AGAINST THE FASCIST FORCES OF EUGENICS, ABLEISM, RACISM, MISOGYNY, HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA & TRANSPHOBIA.

QUICK FACTS:

[1] WE ARE STILL IN A PANDEMIC. COVID IS THE FOURTH LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN THE US.

Over 3.3 million US COVID cases have been reported in 2024, leading to 280,000+ hospitalizations and 30,000+ deaths.² The Economist cites US excess deaths so far in 2024 as closer to **100,000**, noting that “**COVID-19 has led to the deaths of far more people than official statistics suggest**,” especially given that many official tracking and testing measures have been silently shut down.³

[2] COVID = AIRBORNE, VASCULAR DISEASE THAT CAUSES LONG COVID.

COVID *can* spread outdoors — it travels and lingers in the air like cigarette smoke.^{4,5,6} And, even a “mild” COVID infection can cause lasting **brain, lung, heart, and/or immune damage**.⁸ Associated post-infection symptoms (e.g., fatigue, brain fog, difficulty breathing) are labeled “Long COVID.” **Each COVID infection brings a 10-20% chance of developing Long COVID, and this risk increases with every new infection.**⁷ In the US, over 17 million adults and nearly 6 million children have been disabled by Long COVID.^{10,11} There is no known, safe, universal cure or treatment for Long COVID.

THE BEST WAY TO AVOID LONG COVID IS TO AVOID GETTING A COVID INFECTION IN THE FIRST PLACE.

[3] RESPIRATORS (MASKS) WORK.

Vaccines are a necessary, useful tool¹² (we should all stay up-to-date with Flu and COVID boosters!) but we do not yet have a **sterilizing** COVID vaccine. Widespread masking is one of the **BEST** tools we have to prevent the spread of airborne diseases like COVID. KN95 & N95 masks are >95% effective at filtering out viruses & small particles like dust & allergens.¹³ Cloth or surgical masks are **significantly** less effective, but still better than wearing no mask at all, if you don't have access to more protective options.¹⁴

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

It's okay if reading this information makes you feel **scared, angry, confused, or defensive**. It can be difficult to examine our complicity, and we have all been subjected to *constant* messages aimed to convince us that “COVID is over,” that we should simply resume our “normal” lives of unrestrained consumption. Remind yourself: **each new day is an opportunity to make new, better-informed decisions.**

EVEN IF YOU STOPPED MASKING, YOU CAN ALWAYS DECIDE TO START MASKING AGAIN!

ASK YOURSELF...

WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE IN IGNORANCE AND DENIAL, OR IN REALITY?

ARE YOU WILLING TO SACRIFICE YOUR LONG-TERM HEALTH, AND THE HEALTH AND LIVES OF OTHERS, JUST TO EAT INDOORS AT RESTAURANTS?

WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK FROM WEARING A MASK ON THE BUS, AT WORK, AT THE GROCERY STORE, TO THE DOCTOR'S, OR TO A FRIEND'S HOUSE?

HOW CAN YOU UNLEARN INTERNALIZED ABLEISM?

HOW DOES THE WAY WE ALLOW COVID TO SPREAD AND MUTATE UNMITIGATED IN THE U.S. IMPACT PEOPLE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH? IN PLACES LIKE PALESTINE, WHERE DISEASE IS USED AS A TOOL OF GENOCIDAL EMPIRES?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO TRULY MAKE QUEER / BLACK / TRANS / DISABLED LIBERATION A CENTRAL MOTIVATING FORCE IN YOUR DAILY LIFE?



BEST MASKING PRACTICES

NEITHER VACCINES NOR PREVIOUS COVID INFECTIONS GIVE 100% IMMUNITY. VACCINES ARE ONE LAYER OF PROTECTION. AND, IN FACT, PREVIOUS COVID INFECTIONS CAN WEAKEN YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM, MAKING YOU MORE VULNERABLE TO ADDITIONAL INFECTIONS! WEARING A MASK ISN'T A GUARANTEE YOU WON'T GET SICK, BUT IT IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL TO HELP PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

[1] CHOOSE A HIGH-QUALITY RESPIRATOR (KN95, N95, ETC.)

Cloth & surgical masks are not nearly as protective as respirators. Try to find a “NIOSH-approved” respirator.

[2] FIND A STYLE THAT FITS YOU

Unfortunately, many masks have been designed and tested assuming a white male adult user.^{15,16} Some respirators' head straps may be challenging to use if you have curly or thick hair, if you wear your hair in locs, braids, or an Afro, if you wear a hijab, etc. A well-fitting mask covers your nose & mouth, & should have NO gaps for air to escape on the sides, top or bottom. Test a few different styles of masks until you find one that seals well on your face and feels comfortable!

[3] WEAR IT!

A mask is only effective if you wear it — anytime you are in public or around other people. Keep the mask **ON** while you speak, cough, and sneeze. Make it a habit to grab your mask every time you leave home.

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MORE RESOURCES

For the extended version of this pamphlet, complete with more info on COVID, vaccines, disability justice, where to get masks, and plenty of external resources, scan this QR code or visit https://linktr.ee/ACT_UP_MASK_UP.



more info **venmo**

This pamphlet was created by one very passionate (and very tired) queer, trans, disabled person. Please consider sending a tip/donation via Venmo.

NOTE: THIS IS NOT MEDICAL ADVICE. THESE TIPS WILL NOT PROVIDE COMPLETE PROTECTION FROM COVID. MASKING IS ONE USEFUL TOOL IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF AIRBORNE DISEASE.