



The Maryland State Medical Society

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MEDCHI URGES WHITE HOUSE CORONAVIRUS TASK FORCE TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL MANDATE FOR FACIAL MASKS

BALTIMORE, April 27, 2020 — MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, supports evidence-based actions to attempt to minimize the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on our country, particularly as resumption of previously curtailed activities increase. The Guidelines for Opening up America Again recommend individuals “strongly consider using face coverings while in public, and particularly when using mass transit.”ⁱ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention “recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.”ⁱⁱ

MedChi recommends that the White House Coronavirus Task Force consider immediate establishment of a national mandate to wear facial masks or coverings in public at all times in any setting in which social distancing measures are not guaranteed.

Reasons to consider a national mandate include:

1. According to the CDC website: “We now know from recent studies that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.”ⁱⁱⁱ
2. Stephen M. Hahn, MD, the Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, recently stated that randomized controlled trials demonstrating effectiveness of therapeutics will not be available likely until early summer.^{iv} Effective therapeutics are not a given.
3. The availability of an effective vaccine is not guaranteed and not likely soon.
4. Masks have been shown to decrease the amount of viral particles in the ambient air of users but do not provide complete protection. Maximum possible protection in a public place is attained only through universal mask usage.
5. Individual citizens and local governments have varied greatly in establishment of and compliance with pandemic control measures.
6. Evidence suggests that resurgence of Covid19 disease is likely.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. It is the largest physician organization in Maryland. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.

ⁱ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/openingamerica/>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

^{iv} <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/fda-voices/path-forward-coronavirus-treatment-acceleration-program>