

NEWS RELEASE
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Tackling COVID-19 Myths

ELECTRA, TX — After the state of Texas opened up, relaxed its COVID-19 restrictions, and more people started venturing out, the number of community-spread cases began escalating both in Texoma and statewide. Due to this recent escalation and the still-present threat of COVID-19, Electra Hospital District is urging people to continue wearing their masks and following all virus safety recommendations offered by the CDC and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

Laura Teveni, M.D., with Electra Memorial Hospital, says that wearing a mask is not a political statement, but instead, could be a matter of life or death for someone you know and love.

“I would urge and remind the general public that the issue of mitigating this virus is still a public health concern,” Teveni said. “Taking into consideration the recommendations of specialists [epidemiologists, microbiologists, healthcare providers, etc.] is paramount.”

According to the CDC, cloth and surgical masks will help stop germs from spreading when the wearer, who may be sick or asymptomatic, talks, coughs, or sneezes. But if no one else is wearing one, your cloth or surgical mask will not really protect you if those mask-less people happen to be infected.

Healthcare professionals wear N95 masks, which the CDC reports help filter 95 percent of the particles in the air, in order to protect themselves from this threat, but these masks are in limited supply and are generally given directly to hospitals and first responders making them difficult to find for the general public.

Due to the limited supply, cloth and surgical masks are our best bet to avoid spreading the virus, but they can only work if everyone wears them. This can be a difficult feat to accomplish though because of the numerous myths going around about the use of masks and the coronavirus.

Concerned about the misinformation floating around, Teveni sat down and debunked the following myths:

Myth #1: Masks aren't necessary anymore and/or won't protect you.

Masks are one of the best defenses we have against this virus, she said. Other important defenses include frequent handwashing and social distancing. Per the CDC, a face covering should be used in public for ALL people, with the exception of young children under two years of age, anyone who has difficulty breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. But this is why we should all wear them if we can, to protect those who cannot or would be unable to fend off the virus easily, if at all, she said.

Myth #2: I don't need a face covering if I'm not sick.

Although recent studies support rare transmission of truly asymptomatic patients (those who *never* develop *any* symptoms, regardless of a positive test), there have been several case studies documenting outbreaks linked to pre-symptomatic patients, she said. These people may not have any symptoms of infection at first but will develop symptoms in the later course of the illness, usually on days 5-8. These people can spread the virus as early as two days after exposure, despite the delay in symptoms, she said.

Therefore, Teveni said it is absolutely necessary to wear a face covering because it keeps you from infecting others should you become infected and not have symptoms at that time. Wearing a mask is more about protecting others than protecting yourself, but if EVERYONE wears a mask, then ALL are protected.

Myth #3: Social distancing is unnecessary if I'm wearing a mask.

Despite local ordinances, Texas has not yet made the wearing of face masks a state-wide requirement. Therefore, Teveni said the best way to protect yourself from others who choose to go out without a mask, a safe social distance of at least 6-feet is essential. Remember, the cloth and surgical mask you are wearing will not filter out enough of the micro-particles that may transmit the virus if exposed to a mask-less individual, she said.

Be mindful that other countries such as Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia have successfully slowed down the virus and limited the fatality-rate by practicing social distancing, requiring face masks, increasing testing and contact tracing, etc. She said that could be the US as well, if we all work together.

Electra Hospital District wants to remind everyone that taking precautions against COVID-19 such as wearing a mask, washing hands frequently, and practicing safe social distancing can help save lives. If you have questions regarding the virus or any of recommendations mentioned in this article, please email us at COVID-19@electrahospital.com, or visit electrahospital.com/COVID-19.

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