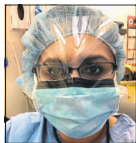


WHY WE MUST WEAR MASKS

COVERING FACE IN PUBLIC INDOOR SPACES AN EFFECTIVE AND PROVEN WEAPON IN FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19, WRITES DR. NADIA ALAM



NADIA ALAM
Column

I spoke up for mandatory masking. Here's why:

COVID-19 remains a global threat. Most who catch it survive. But people in Halton have died from this disease, as young as 19 and as old as in their 90s.

COVID-19 is a new disease. We have no cure, no vaccine. We are learning as we go, but research shows that:

1. This virus spreads quickly within the community.

2. This virus can infect people who show no symptoms. People know to self-isolate if they get sick. But up to 45 per cent of transmission can come from people who don't look or feel sick.

3. This virus spreads through respiratory droplets, not just from sneezing and coughing, but from speaking, singing and laughing.

People worry that masks aren't safe. Doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health-care workers routinely wear masks. Masks do not cause lack of oxygenation, carbon diox-

ide buildup or lung infections. But they may cause a bit of claustrophobia or a dry throat.

Masks can stop anywhere from 50 to 95 per cent of respiratory droplets, depending on how they're made. Well over a hundred studies have arrived at the same conclusion: interventions like social distancing, strict hand washing, testing and contact tracing, isolating the sick, strict disinfection protocols, school closures and also mandatory masking, all reduce illness and death from COVID-19. Countries that have adopted mandatory masking have dropped rates of viral spread to less than 10 per cent. In contrast, countries that have not face viral spread rates of 50 per cent or more.

Masks act as a behavioural nudge. They remind people that the pandemic is ongoing. They are associated with increased compliance with physical distancing. But it takes time to learn how to use a mask. Now is a good time to start, while things are calm.

COVID-19 is here to stay. We cannot remain in lockdown. We must learn to live and work with the virus present. We do so much to keep one another safe: bike helmets, stopping at crosswalks, wearing seatbelts, wearing condoms, getting vaccines, etc. Mandatory masking is another.

Nadia Alam is a Halton physician and past president of the Ontario Medical Association. Her columns also appear on www.drnadiaalam.com. She can be reached through her website.

TO LEARN HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR OWN CONTENT VISIT THEIFP.CA



REOPENING OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR ECONOMY SAFELY

LET'S CONTINUE TO BE VIGILANT AND DO OUR PART TO KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE, WRITES GARY CARR



GARY CARR
Column

Over the past several months, Halton residents have done an incredible job flattening the curve by following public health advice.

Your actions have produced the results we are seeing today, such as lower daily cases, sustained hospital capacity and the ability to reopen parts of our economy and community.

These good results have allowed us to keep moving forward. On Friday, July 24, Halton entered Stage 3 of the province's reopening

plan with nearly all businesses and public spaces able to reopen. This also included an increase to the size of both outdoor and indoor social gatherings.

Like many of you, I am looking forward to seeing more friends and family and enjoying more activities in our community.

PROTECTING THE PROGRESS WE'VE MADE

In addition to the transition to Stage 3, on July 22, regional bylaw 47-20 took effect, making it mandatory to wear a mask or face covering in certain indoor public places to make sure we are reopening safely. There are some individuals who are exempt from wearing mask and I want to remind residents that not all exemptions are visible, so please be kind and support each other.

SUPPORTS FOR BUSINESS OWNERS AND OPERATORS

Every step of the way,

our Small Business Centre has been helping businesses navigate reopening and adjusting to the new normal.

Our team of business consultants are also here to support business owners and operators as they prepare their establishments and policies for the bylaw.

Please reach out to our knowledgeable and friendly team if you need any help.

Thank you again to everyone for doing your part to protect each other.

To learn more about what has reopened, what remains closed and the mandatory mask bylaw, visit our Reopening Halton Region webpage. As always, please continue to visit halton.ca/COVID19 for the latest information on COVID-19 in our community.

Halton Regional Chair Gary Carr can be reached at gary.carr@halton.ca.

ABOUT US

This newspaper, published every Thursday, is a division of the Metroland Media Group Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. The Metroland family of newspapers is comprised of more than 80 community publications across Ontario.

This newspaper is a member of the National NewsMedia Council. Complainants are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of the newspaper and, if not satisfied, write The National NewsMedia Council, Suite 200, 890 Yonge St., Toronto, ON M4W 2H2. Phone: 416-340-1981 Web: www.mediacouncil.ca

nnc National NewsMedia Council
ocna
newsroom@theifp.ca
IndependentAndFreePress
@IFP_11

WHO WE ARE

Publisher
Kelly Montague
Regional Managing Editor
Catherine O'Hara
Managing Editor
Karen Miceli
Distribution Representative
Ioulia Polara
Real Estate
Kristie Pells
Regional Production Manager
Manuel Garcia
Halton Media General Manager
Jason Pehora

CONTACT US

The Independent & Free Press
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1
Phone: 905-873-0301
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480
Fax: 905-873-0398

Letters to the editor
All letters must be fewer than 320 words and include your name and telephone number for verification purposes. We reserve the right to edit, condense or reject letters. Published letters will appear in print and/or online at theifp.ca

Delivery
For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail lpolar@mittoncanadianchampion.com or call 905-234-1019.

