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Face mask or respiratory savior? Some still underestimate it

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Cuba, just like Vietnam, Austria, Czech Republic, Argentina and Venezuela, and some other nations, is one of those countries where the use of face masks is now mandatory to reverse the infection levels of SARS-CoV-2, a virus that has threatened family harmony and the life quality of people in 2020.

Human suffering is on the rise eight months after the outbreak. There are communities that somehow managed to positively adjust previous realities, almost apocalyptic. Italy and Spain, for example, faced a tough panorama early in 2020. However, other nations like the US and Brazil showed the pandemic is far from being properly controlled.

The scientific community proved that measures such as confinement, social distancing, frequent hand washing, chlorine solutions, hand sanitizers, and the proper and responsible handling of face masks are actually effective in the reduction of the infection chain of this new coronavirus.

Nonetheless, we may certainly notice some negligence worldwide. Despite the WHO backs these measures as part of a series of actions that can prevent and control the infection while reducing the surge of the respiratory diseases caused by the virus, like COvid-19, part of the population underestimates their importance.

Especially young people, who trusting their vigor related to age, the absence of severe conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure, plus a poor risk perception given their lack of life experience, are somewhat reluctant to comply with these measures.

Sci-Fi stories also abound. At this point, with 20+ million infected people and 730+ thousands death due to Covid-19, there are still individuals who deny the existence of the virus and thus, they refuse to wear face masks. Even worse, there are communities rejecting all these health measures and refuse to wear face masks.

As chaotic as it seems, there are some people who, instead of wearing face masks, they rather wear something else due to heat or lack of comfort. Others intermittently wear it when they have a snack, or have a dinner in a

restaurant, or just forget about them in night clubs with the excuse of taking some shots.

Youngsters, without face masks and asymptomatic, may develop into a notorious source of contagiousness. According to a research released by JAMA Internal Medicine, asymptomatic individuals with coronavirus carry the same amount of virus loads in nose, throat and lungs as those with symptoms.

According to Mijaíl Favórov, one of the top epidemiologists in the world, the virus development varies depending on the infecting virus. "When you are wearing a face mask, the virus load drops. That means you won't kill your grandmother, but you'll give her a chance to survive even if she gets infected," the scientist pointed out.

The WHO, governments, health-care institutions, media, celebrities, influencers, activists, among others, are permanently advising the world about the need to wear face masks and warn about cases where, due to negligence, relatives and friends have gotten infected, resulting in death sometimes.

In Cuba, authorities are calling for greater efforts to fight coronavirus especially in western provinces with strong emphasis in Havana, where there is a rough situation triggered by a high growth rate of Covid-19-infected people, which led to the adoption of a limited autochthonous transmission phase.

Carlos Alberto Martínez Blanco, Director of Public Health in Havana, highlighted that Havana's Covid situation is not good at all, but there are chances to reverse it. To achieve it, it is paramount to comply with strict hygiene measures, social distancing, and the permanent and proper use of face masks.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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