

April 2, 2020

Dear friends and patients,

Another week has passed. It's been just over three weeks since I sent out my first letter to you with precautions about the coronavirus pandemic. I continue to marvel at how much life has changed in such a short period of time. Three weeks ago I would swing into the grocery store without a second thought, but now I meticulously plan my weekly trip being sure to avoid crowds and I a spray bottle filled with rubbing alcohol to sanitize my hands and cart and I wear a mask. When this pandemic has passed and life has returned to normal I hope I never take a simple run into the grocery store for granted!

As the number of cases of COVID19 in the United States blossom I sometimes find myself feeling fearful about what is coming next and somewhat powerless in the wake of this epidemic. At these times I have to remind myself that there is so much I am doing and can continue to do to keep myself, my family and our community safe. I also remind myself that with taking the proper precautions, the risk of contracting COVID19 is very, very low.

If you have been following the news recently you have seen that the CDC is considering whether we all should be wearing masks when we are out in the public. They haven't come out with any new recommendations however, after reading the details, I feel quite strongly that wearing masks in public could definitely make a difference. I think the CDC has been reluctant to put forth this recommendation because of a fear that masks will be diverted away from health care personnel and that wearing masks might give people a false sense of security. This false sense of security could then result in fewer people staying home and practicing social distancing. I respect the CDC's concerns however, I know that personally wearing a mask is not going to entice me into going to a large social gathering (or even pop into the grocery store for a quick visit!). And, in regards to their concern of depleting the supply of masks for medical personnel, unless you have a close friend or family member who can pilfer one from a hospital (don't even think about it!) there is absolutely nowhere to purchase one. So, if the CDC were to recommend wearing masks how would we all get one? I looked closely at what other options we have and realized it's really quite easy to fashion a mask out of materials that everyone has at home. I created a short 5 minute video to walk you through how to make a super-easy, no-sew face mask.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWInkKc9UQM>

It's also important to remove a mask properly. When you get back to your car or home, sanitize your hands, take off your mask by gently pulling off the ear loops, place the mask in a container and re-sanitize your hands. After using your mask, consider it contaminated and hand wash it or place it where it can dry for several days.

I think that if we all wear masks when we are out for our essential errands we will reduce the spread of airborne droplets and transmission of the virus, particularly by those who are asymptomatic carriers. Homemade masks are not perfect but, at the very least, it can serve as a reminder about social distancing and will keep you from touching your nose and mouth (don't be tempted to touch the mask, always consider the outside of your mask contaminated!)

I have found that one of the best ways to overcome a sense of being powerless is to take action.

Researching mask use, writing this letter and making the video have helped me feel less fearful and more empowered. I have appreciated all of the wonderful responses to my previous letters and would welcome you to share with me your own ways of feeling powerful and fearless in these uncertain times.

Thank you!

Your masked physician and friend,
Christy Seed

If you would like to read more about debate on whether masks should be worn in public *The Atlantic* has an excellent article that you can find here:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/04/coronavirus-pandemic-airborne-go-outside-masks/609235/>

If you are an amazing seamstress (or just know how to use a needle and thread) here is a link for how to make a fancy-dancy face mask for yourself and friends:

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/how-to-make-face-mask-coronavirus.html>