



July 22, 2020

An open letter to the people of Wisconsin,

Wearing a face mask, maintaining physical distancing and regular handwashing are the most effective ways to protect yourself, your family, your friends and your fellow Wisconsinites from becoming infected with COVID-19.^{1,2} It could still be more than a year before an effective vaccine is developed and new therapies are still being studied for their safety and effectiveness.³ The spread of COVID-19 and the duration of the pandemic did not end with the lockdowns. The reopening of our economy should not be confused as a return to normalcy—the pandemic is not behind us.

The continued increase in cases across the state demonstrates that we are still in the first wave of this pandemic. We urge all Wisconsinites to continue to follow the advice and precautions put forth by science, evidence and public health experts.⁴ Proper masking,⁵ distancing⁶ and handwashing,⁷ even at social events and family gatherings, are critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and preventing Wisconsin from becoming a hot spot like Texas, Arizona or Florida. Wearing a mask, even a cloth mask, significantly reduces a person's risk for infection as masks have not been shown to cause harm in healthy individuals with no behavioral health concerns.^{8,9,10} Discounting the effectiveness of these simple measures risks an acceleration and continued duration of this pandemic.

We thank those of you who are doing your part to help slow the spread of this pandemic by **wearing masks and practicing physical distancing**. Continued collective action is necessary and critical to stop the spread of COVID-19, and we are calling on all individuals to do their part to promote our collective health and well-being. We are confident that together we can slow the spread and defeat the COVID-19 virus.

Sincerely,

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- ¹ DK Chu et al. "Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis," *The Lancet* 395, (2020): 1973-1987, doi: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)31142-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)31142-9).
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- ³ National Institutes of Health, "ClinicalTrials.gov – COVID-19," last accessed July 13, 2020, <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/results?cond=COVID-19>.
- ⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), How to Protect Yourself and Others," last accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>.
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- ⁶ W Lyu and G Wehby, "Shelter-in-place orders reduced COVID-19 mortality and reduced the rate of growth in hospitalizations," *Health Affairs* 39, no. 9 (2020), doi: [10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00719](https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00719).
- ⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), Hand Hygiene Recommendations," last accessed July 13, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hand-hygiene.html>.
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- ⁹ A Konda et al. "Aerosol filtration efficiency of common fabrics used in respiratory cloth masks," *ACS Nano* 14, (2020): 6339-6347, doi: [10.1021/acsnano.0c03252](https://doi.org/10.1021/acsnano.0c03252).
- ¹⁰ JH Kim et al. "Effect of external airflow resistive load on postural and exercise-associated cardiovascular and pulmonary responses in pregnancy: a case control study," *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* 15, no. 45 (2015): doi: [10.1186/s12884-015-0474-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-015-0474-7).