

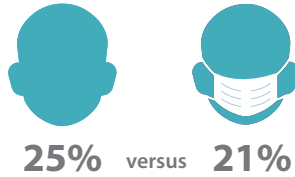
MASKS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Based on evidence from randomized controlled trials

If I wear a surgical mask while out in public, will it protect me from flu-like illness?



2 trials
1683 people



The reduction in flu-like illness may be 4% (range: 0-8%) over 6 weeks.

But no difference in lab-confirmed influenza

What about wearing a surgical mask at home after a household member becomes sick?

Sick person wears mask
2 trials, 903 people



Healthy household members wear masks
1 trial, 290 people



Healthy and sick people wear masks
4 trials, 2750 people



In all three scenarios, wearing a mask did NOT reduce the risk of getting flu-like illness or confirmed influenza.

Masks are only one part of preventing infection.

(for example: physical distancing, hand washing)

Can we trust these results?

Some of the limitations include:



Masks not worn consistently in studies.



For household studies, people already sick before starting to wear masks.



Too few people got sick to show a difference in outcomes.



Definition of flu-like illness inconsistent between trials.

What we do not know yet:

Do cloth masks work in the community?

Will use of masks in public prevent others from getting sick?

Will masks prevent COVID-19 infections?