

## To masks, citizen!

### Press release from the French National Academy of Medicine

April 22, 2020

Three months after the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic on the national territory, in the absence of vaccine and effective medication against SARS-CoV-2, the only way to fight it is to prevent the person-to-person virus transmission. Containment has reinforced the distancing measures, applying the principle of "staying one meter from each other". However, in practice, these measures have often been found to fail in tight spaces, forcing users and customers to pass each other or get closer than one meter, particularly in lifts, shops and public transport.

In order to limit the risk of direct transmission of the virus by droplets projected when speaking, coughing and sneezing, wearing of an anti-splash mask covering the nose and mouth, intended to retain these sprays and prevent their dispersal into the immediate environment, was recommended in a recent Communiqué from National Academy of Medicine [1].

The "altruistic" principle of this type of mask was underlined in recalling that it was not intended to protect the person wearing it, but the people around, according to the "One for all, all for one" principle. To be effective, the wearing of an anti-splash mask should be generalised in all public spaces. This measure can have an epidemiological impact on the circulation of the virus circulation only if everyone is compelled to apply it as soon as he or she leaves home. A simple recommendation cannot suffice, as everyone should consider themselves as potentially carrying the virus and contagious, even when feeling healthy. Taking care not to contaminate others is not optional, it is a "civic" attitude that must be made compulsory in the public space. It is possible, in each family, to make handcrafted masks from "alternative", "screen" or "barrier" fabrics, washable and reusable from common and inexpensive materials [2].

Despite the obvious need for such a measure, despite its acceptability as evidenced by the anticipation of many people who only go out wearing masks, objections in principle delay its implementation and promote the persistence of transmission of the virus transmission in the community. Restricting the wearing of masks only in public transport means neglecting all public spaces where the risk remains. Subject this obligation to the free supply of masks by the State is to comfort the population in a situation of assistance and deresponsibility.

Finally, waiting until May 11 to make the French people wearing the mask means giving 3 weeks of respite to SARS-CoV so that it continues to be transmitted, and accepting several thousand new infections, which means several hundred hospitalizations and several dozen additional deaths.

This is why, since France has declared war on Covid-19, the National Academy of Medicine strongly recommends a Citizen mobilisation for wearing masks.

[1] Covid-19 pandemic: enhanced barrier measures during containment and in the ex-containment phase. Communiqué of the National Academy of Medicine of April 2, 2020.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>