

Recommending wearing a mask without masking the truth

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

May 7, 2020

By raising the crucial question of protective masks, the Covid-19 epidemic sparked a national controversy, fuelled by various positions which reflected more often the inability to respond to an immediate demand than the outcome of a genuine scientific thinking.

In this context, the National Academy of Medicine has taken a stand on three occasions:

- On March 22, by an opinion [1] recalling the historical elements which, for two decades, have led the management of national stocks of masks to a shortage, and recommending that the allocation of FFP2 type masks available in France be reserved in priority for the most exposed professionals, i.e. healthcare professionals.
- On April 2, by a press release [2] recommending that the wearing of a "general public" mask, also known as an "alternative" mask, should be made compulsory for necessary outings during the containment period, and that this obligation should be maintained during the containment lifting period.
- On April 22, a press release [3] urged the Government not to wait until the 11 May deadline to make the wearing of a mask (home-made, alternative, screen or barrier) mandatory in all public spaces, and not only in public transport.

The National Academy of Medicine firmly refutes the tendentious allegations made on certain television channels, according to which the Academy would have completely changed its doctrine on the wearing of masks. It wishes that the comments reporting its positions will neither be truncated nor distorted.

The Academy recalls that there is no contradictions between:

- the first opinion which stressed the imperative need to ensure the protection of health professionals by FFP2 masks,

- and the two press releases which committed to complementing barrier measures with the systematic wearing of an altruistic anti-spray screen to prevent person-to-person transmission in the community.

It deplors the fact that the wearing of "general public" masks, a major measure to prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2, is not one of the 5 barrier actions repeated several times a day by the health authorities.

[1] Opinion of Académie nationale de Médecine: " Masks and Covid-19 ".

[2] Press release of Académie nationale de Médecine: " Covid-19 pandemic: enhanced barrier measures during containment and in the ex-containment phase ".

[3] Press release of Académie nationale de Médecine: " To masks, citizen! ».