



Young people's views and experiences around face coverings

August 2020

Working with the National Citizen Service in West Sussex, Healthwatch West Sussex have captured the views and experiences on the topic of face coverings from some young people's point-of-view (aged 16-19).

Experience of wearing masks

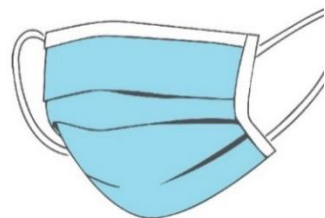
- Worn in charity shop as a volunteer
- Worn on trains - everyone wearing them on the train, but no one on the platform. Guards not wearing them
- College in corridors/supermarkets.

Observations

- Different kinds feel very different
- More structured are harder to speak in, e.g. builders masks
- Disposable feel lighter and more comfortable but harder to talk in as slip down face - needing to constantly re-adjust
- Hot wearing them and talking makes it hotter
- Steaming up glasses - ended up *taking glasses off and putting them on my head*
- If you speak enough you work out how to stop glasses steaming up e.g. *breathe downwards, pull chin backwards.*

Issues

- People don't know how to wear them.
- Metal bit should be at the top. *I wore it upside down the first few times until I read some instructions*
- Seen people wear them inside out and upside down
- On trains people aren't putting them over noses or have them half-way down mouth. They're not extending the folds to make them fit their face
- People fiddling with them all the time
- Beard means it doesn't feel effective.



What to think about?

- Hearing impairments - masks affect communication, e.g. demographic in charity shops older and more poor hearing
- May need to slow down speech, repeat things. Use hands and articulate better
- Facial expressions change with mouth being covered. Can look angry. Also find lean forward more which could add to feeling of aggression
- Could use texts or write things
- Hair can get in way as you put on mask - need to move it out of the way first
- Take glasses off if you can cope without them
- Reusable masks might get washed but might not - another thing to do!

Question - How many times can you wear a disposable? *I feel bad throwing it away so possibly wearing it too long - but feels a waste if only used it to nip to buy milk*

Answer - In short, disposable face masks are not **reusable**, once you have taken it off, touched it, removed it then it needs to be binned and a fresh one applied.

Healthwatch asked an infection control specialist and their suggestion is - to buy lots of handmade ones and have two sandwich bags (clean and dirty) to put on and take off between shops. After touching your mask always use hand gel. Also use gel after touching surfaces when you are out and remember to wash your hands well when you return home. When washing your masks, follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Alternatively, buy loads of disposable masks for when you know you will be wearing one for an hour or so. And remember not to touch your face!

Benefits

- We don't know!
- Makes me feel better
- See it as a marginal benefit but any benefit is good
- At the start, masks worried me - *I thought people might have it [COVID] if they were wearing one - masks caused questions but easier now everyone has to wear one*
- When it's the social norm it will be easier but there are obstacles - images of masked man, different messages in the past.

How to convey the message?

- Influencers wearing them - making it the "thing" to do
- Get message across via adverts - online more useful for young people via Instagram/snapchat (not Facebook). Need infographics.

A big thank you from Healthwatch West Sussex to the NCS youth workers and grads who shared their experience and insights with us.