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Update 40 - COVID-19 – From Office of the Medical Director 17AUG2020 0900

To: All EMS Personnel in the EMS System for Metropolitan Oklahoma City & Tulsa

Key Content:

- **Educational Resource – The Osterholm Update – Episode 20**
- **Mask Care Questions Answered – The Washington Post**
- **Know What a Gaiter Is? You May Want to Avoid Them – The Washington Post**
- **Exhalation Valve Masks & Gaiters Unite! – The Washington Post**
- **Masks, Masks, Masks – Do We Really Need Them? – The New York Times**
- **We Need Kindness and Good News! – The Washington Post**

Lots of thought-provoking (and I hope helpful to your health!) content in this one. Better grab the Route 44 size Sonic Cherry Limeade to stay hydrated. I choose the diet variety so I can slurp in caloric peace. Here's an online recipe (fully caloric) for you aficionados, both locally and afar outside The Sooner State:

<https://www.inthekidskitchen.com/party-recipes/copycat-sonic-cherry-limeade/>

Okay, into the pandemic pandemonium we go....

Educational Resource – The Osterholm Update – Episode 20

Dr. Osterholm shared his insightful answers to questions posed live on this YouTube edition of his update. Here's the links either to the typical podcast:

<https://www.cidrap.umn.edu/covid-19/podcasts-webinars/special-ep-live> or if you want to get some visual with your audio this time around:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=1LXro9ffc5M> All episodes, the current and his prior may be found on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#) and [Google Play](#).

Mask Questions Answered – The Washington Post

Another great reader question as answered by the staff at *The Washington Post*, this one appearing on Thursday, August 13th in its Coronavirus Updates, with several great links within their answers:

“Could you please discuss the cleaning of masks and the use of masks with filters? Is the recommendation to wash after each use to kill the virus or eliminate the wearer's own germs? Can surgical masks be washed without ruining their effectiveness?” — Katrinka in Maryland

Numerous studies have shown that a simple cloth mask — without valves, vents, or filters — is ideal for controlling the spread of the coronavirus outside health-care settings. In updated guidance, the CDC [specifically warns against](#) wearing masks with exhalation valves or vents, even with disposable filters, because “this type of

mask does not prevent the person wearing the mask from transmitting COVID-19 to others.”

The truth is that any mask that advertises “breathability” or “better airflow” is likely allowing viral particles through. A mask made up of a few layers of cotton fabric is still the best way to control the spread of the coronavirus.

In terms of cleaning, Post wellness reporter Allyson Chiu published a story today [that addresses frequently asked questions about how to take care of your face masks](#).

What are the general guidelines for proper mask care?

For cloth masks, which have exploded in popularity in recent months, all three experts interviewed say daily washings are a must.

“Treat your mask like your underwear,” said Jade Flinn, a nurse educator for the Biocontainment Unit at Johns Hopkins Medicine. “You want to change it every day.”

Can N95s or surgical masks be washed?

Unlike the cloth variety, these masks cannot be effectively sanitized by a standard washing, said Elizabeth Mullans, a board-certified dermatologist based in Houston.

“Hospitals may be able to disinfect them, but there’s no way that the average person could go ahead and disinfect them,” Mullans said.

How do I wash my cloth mask?

The [widely recommended method](#), which has also been promoted by the CDC, is simple: Throw the dirty mask in warm or hot water with your regular laundry. Health experts suggest using a fragrance-free, hypoallergenic detergent if your mask has caused skin irritations such as increased acne or rash.

Can sunlight disinfect a mask?

“What I’m seeing is that folks that put it in the sun sometimes are thinking that they are decontaminating the mask,” said Michael Knight, an assistant professor of medicine at George Washington University. “Yes, UV light comes from the sun, but it’s not in a consistent amount to say that ‘yes, this has been decontaminated.’ ”

In the case of surgical or N95 masks, sunlight could be a bad thing, Flinn said, because it can degrade the special materials in some masks.

FAQ: [How to care for your face mask \(and why you shouldn’t hang it from your rear-view mirror\)](#)

Know What a Gaiter Is? You May Want to Avoid Them – The Washington Post

Who knew that the stretchy fabric thing a lot of people are wearing around their neck and then pulling up over their mouth and nose has a more specific name than “that stretchy fabric thing?” You’re ahead of me if you already knew it is called a gaiter. I like learning new things every single day and this was a new thing for me this past week. BUT...not all new things are necessarily happy new things. Turns out a very well-meaning practice of wearing a gaiter could have a counterproductive impact on those you are trying to keep well. According to researchers at Duke University, as reported by *The Washington Post*, fabric often used in these gaiters, the fabric that makes them popular because they

are very easy to breathe through, is also the fabric that breaks your droplets up into smaller particles. And smaller is worrisome because smaller can get through the fabric AND linger out in the airspace. Uh oh.

Personally, I've chosen to not wear gaiters and this article only makes that decision much smarter than what I intended it to be. Check out this article, with a helpful video included in it, for yourself:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/wellness/mask-test-duke-covid/2020/08/10/4f2bb888-db18-11ea-b205-ff838e15a9a6_story.html

Exhalation Valve Masks & Gaiters Unite! – The Washington Post

Looks like *The Washington Post* folks have been super busy on coronavirus pandemic mask topics. I research a lot of sources, though sometimes one seems to be particularly “on point” at least about a topic of our interest. Here's a story that got lost in the fray back in late June, though the CDC has re-ignited interest in those N95 masks with the exhalation valves by recently changing their advisories on masks to specifically AVOID the N95s (and any other masks) with exhalation ports or valves. The reasoning? Yes, the mask, especially if N95, will help protect you, BUT the port/valve that allows easy exhalation defeats the purpose of also helping to protect others near you. Here's the story as it appeared in *The Washington Post* on June 28th:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/why-simple-cloth-masks-without-valves-are-better-at-fighting-the-spread-of-covid-19/2020/06/26/c445fca6-b574-11ea-aca5-ebb63d27e1ff_story.html

AND, straight from the CDC, here's their latest mask recommendations, including avoiding masks with exhalation ports/valves, updated on August 7th:

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

Masks, Masks, Masks – Do We Really Need Them? – The New York Times

Yes, we do. In these Updates, we've spoken since their beginning about concerns for both droplet AND airborne (also called aerosol) transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. There has certainly been some debating this, even by WHO experts. I have no bias other than the truth, whether that proves our early concerns correct or that proves we were worrying about what isn't valid. I'd much rather our concerns be proven wrong, but here's the latest in airborne research as published by *The New York Times*. I think it's more important than ever to avoid gaiters, avoid exhalation port/valve masks and use a recommended mask. Here's this link:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/11/health/coronavirus-aerosols-indoors.html>

We Need Kindness and Good News! – The Washington Post

I was tempted to save this for Update 41, but why save kindness for later when we need it now?!?

Here's one more reader question with great answers from *The Washington Post* staff, appearing on Friday, August 14th in its Coronavirus Updates, and it reminds us that kindness can and should be liberally shared, with safety of course, in pandemic times. I hope this will help you, your family, and your friends in one of the great acts of kindness almost everyone seems to enjoy, sharing tasty home-made food!

“I want to prepare a cooked meal for an elderly friend who does not live with me and my wife. What precautions should I take to make sure that I don't serve her something contaminated?” —Jim in California

Our first recommendation would be to reach out to your friend to see if that's something she would be comfortable accepting, if you haven't already. Asking "what do you need?" [might result in other opportunities](#) to help that you hadn't considered, but could be enormously valuable to your friend.

That said, cooking meals is a great way to lend a hand to a neighbor, and it also conveys the thoughtfulness that you and your wife are hoping to express. The trick is [to do it safely](#).

Don't cook for others if you feel unwell

This seems obvious but we have to point it out. If you've previously had covid-19, check with your doctor to see whether you've recovered enough, and given the virus enough time to leave your body, to cook for others.

Clean your kitchen

Disinfect the surfaces of your kitchen before starting, and sanitize the pots, pans and utensils you will be using. Running them through the dishwasher, even if they're already "clean," is an easy way to do this.

Wear a mask

Even though you're in your own home, you should wear a mask while cooking for other people. It's probably best to put the mask on before you pre-clean, so you're not spreading germs during that process that could be left behind.

Wash your hands thoroughly

Wash your hands with soap and warm water throughout the process. "Especially if you end up touching your face or another surface or your phone during the cooking process, rewash your hands again before you're going to touch the food," Dr. Karen Krueger, an infectious disease specialist at Northwestern Medicine, [told the Food Network](#).

Cook food to proper temperature

"The virus is very sensitive to cooking," Francisco Diez-Gonzalez, director of the Center for Food Safety at the University of Georgia, [told Voraciously](#). "Heat is going to kill it very easily." Use a digital thermometer, and check against the government's [safe minimum cooking temperature chart](#), Voraciously suggests.

Package food in disposable containers

Do this to minimize contact. You can use store-bought disposable containers or you can simply tell your neighbor that you don't need the trays or pans back.

Vigilance. Safety. Evidence-Based Service to Others.

Let's be careful out there.

Dr. Goodloe