

HEALTH Published February 13, 2023 7:17pm EST

# Face masks made 'little to no difference' in preventing spread of COVID, scientific review finds

Research suggests CDC's claims of mask effectiveness may have been exaggerated

By Melissa Rudy | Fox News



## Masking kids doesn't work to slow COVID spread: Dr. Marc Siegel

Fox News medical contributor examines the new omicron subvariant prompting many cities to reinstate mask mandates for children and weighs in on Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin's condition.

The stance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on face masks has taken many twists and turns throughout [the COVID pandemic](#).

After initially claiming face coverings weren't necessary, the CDC changed course in April 2020, calling on all Americans — even children as young as 2 years old — to mask up.

That September, then-CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield said during a Senate hearing that "face masks are the most important powerful health tool we have," even suggesting that they might offer more protection than vaccines.

### [COVID-19'S LASTING IMPACT: 'LESS ATTRACTIVE' PEOPLE WEAR MASKS MORE OFTEN THAN OTHERS](#)

Those recommendations likely played a large part in 39 U.S. states eventually enacting mask mandates.

Now, a new scientific review suggests that widespread masking may have done little to nothing to curb [the transmission of COVID-19](#).

The review, titled "Physical interventions to interrupt or reduce the spread of respiratory viruses," was led by 12 researchers from esteemed universities around the world.



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Dr. Rachele Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, wears a mask. The CDC's stance on face masks has taken many twists and turns throughout the pandemic. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh, Pool, File)

Published by Cochrane Library, the review dug into the findings of 78 randomized controlled trials to determine whether "physical interventions" — including face masks and hand-washing — lessened the spread of [respiratory viruses](#).

## A new scientific review suggests that widespread masking may have done little to nothing to curb the transmission of COVID.

When comparing the use of medical/surgical masks to wearing no masks, the review found that "wearing a mask may make little to no difference in how many people caught a flu-like illness/COVID-like illness (nine studies; 276,917 people); and probably makes little or no difference in how many people have flu/COVID confirmed by a laboratory test (six studies; 13,919 people)."

### [NJ 3-YEAR-OLD KICKED OUT OF SPEECH THERAPY DUE TO MASK MANDATES: 'CATASTROPHIC MORAL CRIME'](#)

Next, the review compared medical/surgical masks to N95 respirators (or P2 respirators, which are used in Europe).

It found that "wearing N95/P2 respirators probably makes little to no difference in how many people have confirmed flu (five studies; 8407 people); and may make little to no difference in how many people catch a flu-like illness (five studies; 8407 people), or respiratory illness (three studies; 7799 people)."



"It was the state and local authorities that took the CDC's recommendations and implemented the mandates," Dr. Marc Siegel, a Fox News medical contributor based in New York City, told Fox News Digital. (iStock)

The 78 studies looked at [participants from countries](#) of all income levels.

Data was gathered during the H1N1 flu pandemic in 2009, non-epidemic flu seasons, epidemic flu seasons up to 2016 and the COVID-19 pandemic, the study authors wrote.

## Doctor says review had some key limitations

The new findings seem to call into question the CDC's enthusiastic embrace of widespread masking.

### [WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO SUFFER FROM 'LONG COVID,' BUT HEALTHY HABITS CAN LOWER THE RISK](#)

However, Dr. Marc Siegel, professor of medicine at NYU Langone Medical Center and a Fox News medical contributor, pointed out a key limitation: "The researchers focus primarily on randomized trials, but most of the studies that have been done on masks are population studies," he said.

"There are very few randomized trials on masks."

**"The recommendations may have been wrong, but the CDC doesn't deserve the blame for everything."**

— Dr. Marc Siegel

In a randomized trial, researchers place participants in different groups and observe the results in a controlled environment.

By contrast, population-based studies measure outcomes in a "real-world" setting.



In April 2020, the CDC called on all Americans — even very young children — to mask up against the coronavirus. (Reuters/Brendan McDermid/File Photo)

The study authors did admit to some limitations and a risk of bias, including the low number of people who followed mask guidance and the wide variation of outcomes.

"The results might change when further evidence becomes available," they wrote.

## 'Be sure of consistency'

Dr. Siegel said he has never supported mask mandates.

### [REACTION TO 4-YEAR-OLD CHILD FORCED TO LEAVE SCHOOL FOR NOT WEARING A MASK: 'COMPLETELY BAFFLING'](#)

He believes that while masks might be effective on an individual level, they don't work as well on a population level.



"If you're going to mandate something, you'd have to be sure of consistency across the population, and that's never happened," he said.

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However, the physician pointed out that the CDC never actually mandated masks – with the exception of a public transportation mandate in January 2021.



As of right now, no U.S. states have mask mandates in place. (Getty Images)

"It was the state and local authorities that took the CDC's recommendations and implemented the mandates," Dr. Siegel said.

"The recommendations may have been wrong, but the CDC doesn't deserve the blame for everything. I think they were aware that masks may have value on a personal basis, but they got carried away with the politics."

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As of right now, no U.S. states have mask mandates in place.

On Sunday, [New York](#) dropped its state-wide mask requirement in hospitals – leaving the decision up to individual facilities. Many health care facilities are currently still requiring them.



Melissa Rudy is health editor and a member of the lifestyle team at Fox News Digital.

### Conversation 9.4K Comments


What do you think?



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- C** **captainsanity** 14 February, 2023  
I've been saying for a long time masks were nothing more than a feel-good measure designed to make people think they were "doing something" and delude themselves into thinking they had some control.  
They might as well have done a rain dance or the hokey-pokey.  
Reply · 139 · 3 · Share
- R** **rygby** 14 February, 2023  
AOC would have gotten confused at "put your right hand in".  
Reply · 22 · Share  
2 replies
- S** **savagemugbone** 15 February, 2023  
Aka known as virtue signalling. Liberals are big on that.  
(Edited)  
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Show 2 more replies

- B** **bigbobjr.** 14 February, 2023  
When the actual manufacturer of the mask doesn't say one word about its effectiveness against a virus what does that tell you? Did you find a mask box or package that made a claim of effectiveness against viruses?? That's a rhetorical question. I'll bet during the next pandemic, all those bo...  
**See more**  
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- U** **USA-4-eva** 14 February, 2023  
I work in a hospital laboratory and it is printed on the box, in English and Chinese, that the masks do not prevent or protect against respiratory viral transmission.  
Reply · 52 · 1 · Share  
4 replies
- B** **bidenisabutnugget** 14 February, 2023  
Exactly, unless it's an N95, all others actually had disclaimers printed on the boxes saying they will not protect against viral infection.  
Reply · 45 · 3 · Share  
10 replies  
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-  *This comment violated our policy.*
- R** **RetiredCivilEng** 14 February, 2023  
I never wore a mask anywhere unless it was required to get in some building. I was at a park where they were required, and everybody ignored the regulations. There will still be people riding down the interstates wearing their masks. Dems are like that!  
Reply · 335 · 8 · Share
- saltqueen99** 14 February, 2023  
My daughter was fired from two different jobs for not having a mask on. One of them was when she sneezed in her cubicle and ruined her mask. She took it off then got busy with a call and forgot to put one on. The second time, she was off work and walking across an empty lobby to the exit. A "se...  
**See more**  
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1 reply
- larlinmel** 14 February, 2023  
There were even people arrested on ferries for refusing to wear a mask. They should be able to sue.  
(Edited)  
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- bornconserv1**  
14 February, 2023  
I'm sure the medical institutions were raking in millions through the purchase of masks and hygiene products. Follow the money and you'll find the reason for just about anything.  
Reply - 69 - 3 - Share
  - D demsarmageddoncreation**  
14 February, 2023  
Covid is big business for the medical, pharmaceutical and many other fields, even politicians cashed in (didn't they Dems). It actually worked in their favor telling people to go out in public with something they knew wouldn't protect them. People are being scammed everyday by the very people that ...  
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  - rmartin68911**  
14 February, 2023  
Masks made in China to "combat" a virus made in China  
Makes perfect sense . . . .  
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- blazinggator**  
14 February, 2023  
Not us, but all the sheep that followed, I didn't follow.  
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  - B BurtGummer570**  
14 February, 2023  
Only the unvaccinated are smart enough to run the country.  
Reply - 7 - Share
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- C cknapp1961**  
14 February, 2023  
Wrong. Was it not about getting rid of Trump? Create a pandemic, change the voting laws, oust Trump?  
Reply - 67 - 1 - Share
  - T TXLibrarian75**  
14 February, 2023  
Now criminals use them to break laws and hurt/kill. Of course, antifa lead that trend.  
Reply - 9 - Share
- Show 8 more replies  
Show 3 more replies

- M mlb6d9**  
14 February, 2023  
It made no difference as far as the bug was concerned, but more importantly it was a success in demonstrating just how far the gov't could push the population  
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  - O onlyeng**  
14 February, 2023  
And it was a success for China, selling the world billions of useless masks.  
Reply - 25 - 1 - Share
- 2 replies

- B bigjohnhunkler802**  
14 February, 2023  
THISJUST IN: The CDC has determined that chainlink fence has little to no effect on the spread of Malaria.  
Reply - 126 - 4 - Share
  - T The-Great-Dying**  
14 February, 2023  
Apparently Chicken Wire fencing is better.  
Reply - 18 - 1 - Share
- 3 replies
- B basket151**  
14 February, 2023  
Best post of the day!  
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**OliveApple**  
14 February, 2023  
My 8 year old daughter goes to public school here in Georgia. Her school closed for the remainder of the school year when covid first broke out but they returned to school the following fall. The students were never required to wear masks and I only saw about 3 that did in her school of around 800 ...  
**See more**  
Reply - 👍 10 🗨️ 1 - Share

**vppacificocean**  
14 February, 2023  
All teachers went on a paid holiday  
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↳ 1 reply

**Nebuchadnezzarr**  
14 February, 2023  
And there it is. What Millions have said since the beginning but kept being CENSORED for saying it. It was NEVER about safety, it was to DEHUMANIZE you and everyone else who was told to "put on a mask"  
Reply - 👍 83 🗨️ 3 - Share

**Popevil**  
14 February, 2023  
I had 3 doctors tell me when they entered the examination room to take off the mask as it doesn't help. Of course I had to put it back on when I left the examination room.  
(Edited)  
Reply - 👍 23 🗨️ 2 - Share  
↳ 1 reply  
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**B bonegnasher**  
14 February, 2023  
the masks were always about subjugation, and never about protection  
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↳ 1 reply

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**Popevil**  
14 February, 2023  
The CDC and the government had to scare people into compliance.  
Reply - 👍 11 🗨️ - Share

**C christian-conservative-1**  
14 February, 2023  
Everything they said was a blatant lie  
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