

Covid Protocol

My Personal Covid Protocol:

In order to keep myself safe, these are some risk mitigation practices that I follow.

My lifestyle:

- My job is completely remote
- I live alone
- I only spend time with people unmasked who practice similar Covid risk mitigation. Because I don't know anyone who is Covid conscious, I do not unmask around anyone else or anywhere other than my home and car

Masking:

- I wear a fit-tested N95 mask or elastomeric respirator at all times in all indoor settings and around others
- I mask in outdoor spaces such as parks, parking lots, breezeways, or on the sidewalk
- I always mask in drive-thrus at fast food, at ATM's, and gas stations. When back on the main road, I roll the windows down for a few minutes to clear the air
- Masked activities outside my home are limited to:
 - Occasional in-person shopping such as thrifting or Costco. Most groceries are delivered to my home, most shopping is done online
 - Spending time with friends or family in a public place or in their homes
 - Going to the park
 - Going to non-virtual doctor appointments
- If I need to be indoors for an extended period of time (in the ER or during a very long appointment), I use Sip Airtight drinking valves.

This helps me stay hydrated and I can also drink protein drinks for calories if needed

- I do not remove my mask at all, even to eat or drink until I'm at a safe location such as in my car or at home.
- If opening my car door brings in potentially contaminated air from a busy parking lot, I drive with all the windows down on uncrowded streets or on the freeway for a few minutes to expel the air.
- I keep the air in the car circulating rather than bringing in outside air

Home Air Quality:

- Prior to guests arriving to my home, I:
 - open the doors and windows as much as weather permits
 - and run the HVAC system AC, heater, or fan depending on the weather
 - Run my HEPA filter air purifier
- These conditions stay this way during their entire visit and at least 4+ hours after they've left. Only after multiple hours of air cleaning do I remove my mask
- I give all guests an N95 before entering my home. I give them instructions on how to put it on in front of my apartment with the door shut and watch them, helping them along the way. Unfortunately most people don't know how to wear them or don't take the time to put them on properly
- I mask while anyone is in my home, even if they've put on the N95 I've given them because:
 - I know that the mask has not been fit-tested
 - most people aren't experienced with wearing them properly
 - many people wear them with facial hair. Being clean-shaven improves the seal
 - Many people don't give a fuck or are uneducated

Food:

- Most of my groceries are delivered. I mask when opening my door to bring the bags inside and for a little while while my air purifier recirculates the air

- I wash my hands thoroughly after handling items
- If I do pick up, I wear my N95 and have them load up my trunk. I roll my windows down for a few minutes on my way home
- I don't eat or drink at restaurants or breweries

Cleaning:

- When out in the world, I minimize face touching, especially eyes and nose
- I use hand sanitizer or Wet Ones sanitizing wipes as soon as I get in my car after being in a public place and between multiple public places
- I sanitize commonly touched surfaces in my car with Clorox wipes
- I wash my hands immediately after coming home from any setting, using plenty of soap for 20+ seconds

Communication:

- I inform others who are Covid conscious of any risk that may be elevated from my usual and ask the same of others
- I quarantine for 14 days in the case of any potential elevated risk or exposure and ask the same of others

Testing:

At the moment I don't know anyone safe enough to unmask around. But in the past before unmasking around someone, I requested a Covid test.

- Best option: at-home Rapid NAAT Lucira Covid + Flu Test Kit (a highly accurate at-home test you can purchase online)
- Second best option: a regular rapid antigen at-home test (with the knowledge that they aren't as effective, at ~60% accuracy or less)
 - I provide tips on how to take those tests to improve accuracy
- Third best option: lab or drive-thru test. However, the risk of potential exposure from others also being tested is not ideal
- I also take a Covid test before hanging out unmasked if requested, but most people don't ask because they have higher risk tolerance than me

Covid Protocol Questions:

I ask some people about their Covid protocol before spending time with them in person. Some people I don't bother because I already know they don't have any Covid mitigation practices

When asking about personal protocol, I explain that:

- the most recent few weeks will help account for incubation period
- this includes their own safety protocol but also of any people they are around in their "bubble"
- who the people in their "bubble" would be:
 - Anyone when both parties are unmasked, wearing a cloth mask, a surgical mask (not very effective), or a mask that has not been fit-tested
 - or any other situation in which you are not wearing a fit-tested N95 or elastomeric respirator
 - anyone spent time with unmasked: briefly, only once, regularly, privately, publicly, indoors, outdoors, at work, at home, etc.
 - ...Essentially, anyone you have shared any airspace with is now in your "bubble"
- I explain why it's valuable information for me to understand someone's "bubble"
 - An example I use: if a friend wears an N95 every day to work, but her son goes to high school unmasked every day and they live together, it's a bubble that is too high risk for me

There are many vectors of risk that are not commonly considered.

For example: when asking about someone's "bubble":

- If you breathe air that another person has breathed, you are now in the same "bubble." All indoor spaces should be considered, even if no one was present in the space the moment you were there. You don't know who was there prior to your arrival. Prior to arrival includes minutes to hours in advance. In nearly all cases, when you are unmasked indoors that means you are breathing air someone else also breathed.

- Being in someone's bubble also includes outdoor space/air, unless:
 - you are positive it has been secluded for a long while prior
 - It does not have air blowing from indoor or unsafe outdoor spaces
 - My own example: I unfortunately cannot sit unmasked on my patio unless I know my downstairs neighbor has been at work for hours, because him going into his yard, having his windows or patio doors open, and even his dogs being in the yard (dogs can be carriers!) can compromise my outdoor patio air space
- Outdoor air quality also has other factors to consider, including weather, humidity, wind, etc

Air Space:

- While limited, there are ways to clear or assess outdoor air space safety:
 - portable air filters
 - being upwind
 - paying attention to the weather (the more humid- the safer!)
- You can clean indoor air space! There are many factors to consider, such as:
 - what type of heating and cooling system does the place/room have?
 - What kind of filters are used in that system?
 - My own example: the HVAC system in my apartment is not connected to any other units (supposedly; I smell my downstairs neighbor's weed when my heater and AC kick on, so I run an air filter just in case)
 - Many large buildings such as offices, hotels, or dorms recycle the same air in all rooms
 - Consider the way swamp coolers run: there's potential for blowing contaminated air into your space because they run by bringing outside air into the space and cooling that air. So if the

building is right next to an open-air Covid testing site or a busy soccer field, it could increase risk

Reducing risk of air quality:

If you're in a building with shared air in all rooms:

- Install internal door seals to make the doors airtight
- Reduce the amount of time sealed doors are open
- When cleaning the air DIY, take into account the amount of air cycles per minute air cleaning is done. This way you can wait the appropriate amount of time before unmasking
- Be sure all windows are airtight and sealed, or won't create a backdraft if opened. Then, safely open windows to blow air out
- Cover the vents blowing contaminated air into your room with HEPA filters. Make sure the filters are attached airtight and sealed properly
- Make sure the HVAC system's fan is using HEPA filters
- Create air circulation by using fans
- Run the AC or heater with HEPA filters
- Run air purifiers
- Run a DIY Corsi-Rosenthal box air cleaner

The amount of time to have everything running to clean the air is estimated while considering multiple variables, such as:

- size of the space
- number of occupants
- if occupants were masked or not
- if masks worn were fit-tested
- if they were clean shaven vs had facial hair
- if they were wearing lots of makeup
- If they recently applied moisturizer prior to masking, depending on the mask
- how long they were in the space
- what activities happened in the space (e.g. singing or strenuous physical activities increase aerosol in the air due to more breathing)

- were they sweating? Damp masks can reduce efficacy due to the impact on the elastomeric charge
- how much viral load each person is carrying (knowingly or unknowingly)

Final important notes:

- “6 ft social distancing” is an arbitrary, inaccurate, and disproved transmission theory based only on droplets and not aerosol. Masks and good ventilation work best. Just standing far away from someone is ineffective
- Important parts of wearing a mask:
 - wearing it correctly
 - fit-testing
 - wearing it both indoors & outdoors
 - wearing it in transition spaces
 - wearing it the entire time with no eating or drinking, no matter how brief
 - Choosing masks from reputable sources with the correct standards
- Major factor in reducing severity of illness if you are potentially exposed is to do what you can to reduce the viral load you inhale. For example, if you forget and step out without a mask on, put it on as quickly as possible
- Continue to keep up with vaccinations
- Find a local Mask Bloc org in your area for free masks and local resources
- Let me know if you want articles on:
 - how to estimate how long you should clean the air in your space

- how to make a Corsi-Rosenthal box
- comparing efficacy and decibel levels of store-bought air purifier machines
- DIY at-home fit-testing guides
- Mask resources
- And others I'm probably forgetting