

BBC World News - Face Masks in Japan

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In many western countries the **debate** over wearing a face mask has become mixed up with politics and ideas of freedom. In Japan, wearing a mask is simp - simply what you do to stop viruses. People have been doing it for years long before Covid19. Medical experts believe it's a **habit** that's helped them now. From Tokyo, here's Rupert Winfield Hayes:

At Shinagawa station in Tokyo it's the morning rush hour. Tens of thousands are **pouring** from the station heading for nearby office towers. Not a single person here is without a face mask. No-one has been ordered to wear one, but everyone does.

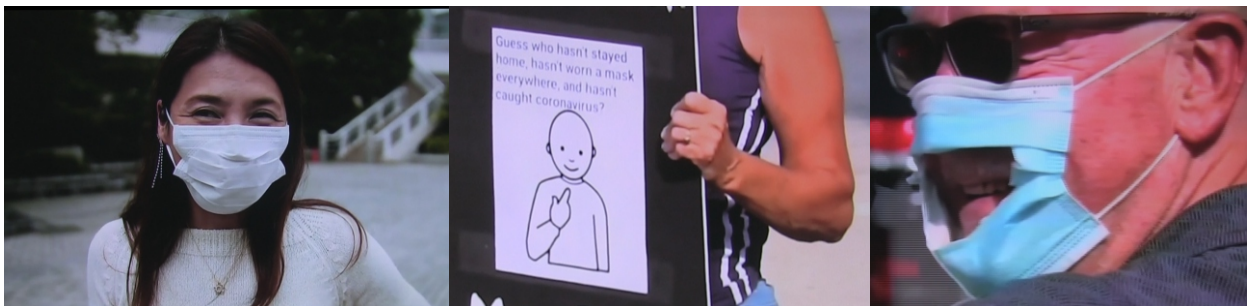
"I don't think it's **acceptable** not to wear a mask. I think everyone in the world should do so. Coronavirus is something we should take very **seriously**."

"I think Japanese are **obedient**. They listen to what other people say, that's why we wear masks. It's very Japanese."

The effectiveness of masks like these at protecting you from Covid19 is still **hotly** debated. But there is a **striking** difference in death rate between countries like Japan, where masks are **universally** worn, and places where they aren't. In the United States the current **mortality** rate from Covid19 is four hundred per million. In the United Kingdom it is under six hundred per million. Here in Japan it's just seven per million.

What do you think about face masks?

angrily
argument
conforming
death
earnestly
flowing
obvious
routine
the done thing
uniformly





Do you have your own personal, washable, reusable face mask?

action

defend

dejection

deliberate

endure

hassle

in truth

inhabitant

public

released

scandalous

wired

Scenes like these of Americans protesting against mask wearing, have left one of the world's leading public health experts shaking his head in **despair**:

"You know, it's striking if one looks at the United States where there is almost a **wilful, flagrant** desire to show that I'm not going to do what other people are telling me to do. I'm not going to wear a mask. And it's, it's, it transformed from the idea, how do we **protect** each other to, erh, I'm going to show that I'm not going to be pushed around."

In Japan, university experiments like these have shown clearly how wearing a mask can cut the volume of droplets **ejected** by a cough or a sneeze.

For long time Tokyo **resident**, James Whitlow Delano, there is no question where he'd rather be during this pandemic:

"I'd rather be here. I think the Japanese generally speaking are more **civic** minded, community minded. They care, **frankly**, more about their neighbours. Individualism is great. it's **baked** into who I am but this is a time to set that aside for other people and to me, erh, mask wearing is so important in that **process**."

Until there is a vaccine for Covid19 this is the new reality. If wearing a mask can help protect yourself and others, it's a **discomfort** that most Japanese people appear willing to **bear**. Rupert Winfield Hayes, BBC news, in Tokyo.