

Patriotism: Protecting the Health of Americans

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Americans can express their patriotism and respect for their fellow citizens during this public health crisis by wearing a face mask.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - As we move through a year that has already been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we think ahead to when we can resume normal activities, be part of community gatherings and celebrate holidays, like Independence Day.

Independence Day invokes strong feelings about patriotism and freedom. Many Americans use this time of year to celebrate the holiday and express these feelings, whether it's in the form of yard displays, fireworks or even red, white and blue clothing.

Patriotism is celebrated during this holiday, but what does it mean and what makes someone patriotic? Is it wearing red, white and blue, flying the American flag or watching the fireworks during this time of year? These traditions can help any American feel patriotic for a day, but how can we continue to show our pride for our country and respect for our fellow Americans?

One way to show our admiration for our country is by simply wearing a face covering to protect the health of those around us. This is one of the easiest and greatest opportunities we all have to support our state and country in a unified manner. Wearing a mask is one simple step we can take to protect our fellow citizens and avoid the spread of a disease that impacts our health, economy and every other aspect of life.



In the past few months, we've become accustomed to social distancing and other public health practices to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. Although some restrictions have been eased, it's important to remember we're still in the middle of a global pandemic and we need to take certain precautions.

Public health experts have emphasized one of the best ways for us to limit the spread is to wear a mask. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges individuals to wear cloth face coverings when in public to prevent community spread of the contagious virus. In fact, the CDC website offers valuable information on how to properly wear and wash a face mask and even provides directions on how to make a cloth face mask.



I wear a mask when I venture out in public. If I happen to be carrying the virus even without showing symptoms, I could pass it onto someone else just by speaking to them or even breathing near them. It's not worth the risk to be in public without a mask and potentially infect others.

Unfortunately, the public health recommendation that masks be worn in public has strangely become a partisan issue. It appears that many would rather excuse themselves from wearing a mask because our president refuses to wear a mask, political allegiance and the appearance that it's unpatriotic.

Similar to the small safety measure of a face mask, many things have become twisted to be viewed as a partisan issue. When the pandemic first started impacting Wisconsin and we had the "Safer at Home" plan in place, we heard some residents proclaim their freedom was taken from them.

However, I understood, as did the majority of Wisconsinites, some sacrifices would have to be made to get through this crisis and grow stronger from it. Similar to breathing in dangerous carcinogens, which we do all we can to avoid, our health is at risk due to COVID-19, even though it could have been easily prevented. We can be good citizens of our state and country by simply wearing a mask to lower the chance of passing on an infectious disease.

As we head into Independence Day weekend, I ask that you consider what you can do to be a good citizen. If you haven't done so already, start wearing a mask to protect members of your community. Pay attention to where your red, white and blue clothing or the fireworks you just bought are made. Buy local and American-made products.

Patriotism isn't just the annual display of colors and fireworks. We can celebrate our patriotism every single day by being thoughtful citizens and respecting the people all around us.

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