

Masks and summer heat: Not a great mix, but experts have tips

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(HealthDay)—Dr. Teresa Murray Amato rode the subway into

Manhattan from Queens the other day and found that summertime and face masks aren't an easy fit.

"It was a warm day. I definitely felt it was a little hot," said Amato, director of emergency medicine at Long Island Jewish Forest Hills in Queens, N.Y.

Despite her discomfort, Amato resisted the urge to remove her mask—and she recommends that you do the same.

COVID-19 continues to spread even in the humid heat of summer, so it's important to keep wearing masks and maintaining social distancing to prevent transmission, said Dr. Waleed Javaid, director of infection prevention and control at Mount Sinai Downtown in New York City.

At least 10 states—Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas—reached record levels of hospitalized COVID-19 patients on Sunday, the *Washington Post* has reported.

This was the risk of reopening, but public health officials have said it's worth it if people wear masks.

Evidence has shown that [masks](#) can reduce transmission of the new coronavirus, if everyone wears one, Amato said.

Summer heat may make your mask feel stifling, but you should keep wearing it if you're near other people or in enclosed spaces, she said.

"Even though we know it's going to be a little uncomfortable, I really think the benefits outweigh the discomfort of being a little warm while wearing your mask," Amato said.

Keeping both your mouth and nose covered is important. Folks struggling with their mask in the heat might try switching to a lightweight one that's more breathable.

At this point, [surgical masks](#) are in good enough supply that people who are uncomfortable with a cloth face covering might consider buying a box, Amato said. Even grocery stores are carrying them now.

"A light surgical mask probably does the trick with the least amount of discomfort," she said.

Sweat is another problem. If your mask becomes damp with sweat, its ability to screen out coronavirus is diminished, Amato and Javaid said.

"If it gets sweaty or damp for any reason, you should change the mask," Javaid said.

Consider keeping at least one mask on hand to swap out if necessary, Amato said.

"In an ideal world, you'd be able to have a few clean ones in your pocket, but I know that's not always possible," she added.

Folks who find themselves struggling to breathe should take a short break, Amato said.

"It does help if you can take a little bit of a break, distance yourself from people and lift the mask up a little bit, cool yourself off," she said.

Be sure to stay hydrated, Amato said. Dizziness or a racing heart could be a sign of heat exhaustion. In that case, get out of the heat, remove your mask and seek medical care.

The good news is that you can take your mask off when enjoying the pool, beach or local park—as long as you maintain social distancing.

"Getting out there and getting some fresh air just makes you mentally feel better," Amato said. "If you can social distance and you can stay quite a bit of distance away from other people and you're outdoors, we feel pretty comfortable saying you can take that mask off."

The same goes for outdoor exercise like jogging or cycling. As long as you can stay at least 6 feet away from others, you don't need to wear a mask.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [COVID-19](#).

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