

Gloves may do more harm than good when it comes to protecting you from COVID-19

July 28 2020, by Lauren Leazenby



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

People want to debate whether wearing a mask works against COVID-19, but the CDC says it's the gloves you should take off.

The CDC and the European CDC have both released guidelines stating that glove use isn't a necessary preventive tactic when it comes to COVID-19. CDC guidelines say gloves "will not necessarily protect you from getting COVID-19 and may still lead to the spread of germs."

Gloves can trick the wearer into complacency, said Allison Bartlett, associate medical director of the Infection Control Program Pediatric at the University of Chicago. She said gloves are not a substitute for good [hand](#) hygiene.

"I think that disposable surgical gloves don't really have a place in [coronavirus](#) (protection)," Bartlett said. "People get the false sense of security that their hands are clean and protected when that's not the case at all."

She said you might accidentally contaminate your hands in removing gloves, so if you don't wash your hands after you take your gloves off, your hands aren't clean—assuming your hands were clean when you put the gloves on.

"You might feel protected because your skin is not touching a surface," Bartlett said, but as soon as you move from touching that surface to touching your mask or face, that's contamination, even if you are wearing gloves. "And you've accomplished nothing in the way of safety," she said.

According to the CDC guidelines, reusable gloves can be used while dishwashing or deep cleaning your home, but this is more about protecting your hands than transmission prevention, Bartlett said. The CDC also recommends wearing disposable gloves if you're taking care of someone who is sick and there is an increased risk of coming in contact with their secretions.

Gloves are most needed in medical settings where [health care workers](#) know how to use them, Bartlett said. Widespread use of gloves by the [general public](#) can deplete the supplies of those who need them most. She said there is not the same level of shortage now as when the pandemic started, but keeping up that supply is more difficult as the pandemic continues.

Bartlett said there's also an environmental aspect to consider. Gloves are single use. "The only thing that irks me more than seeing people out and about in the [grocery store](#) with [gloves](#) is on my walk home from the the hospital when I see the new COVID garbage on the ground," she said.

In preventing the spread of COVID-19, Bartlett said it's important to focus on what works. "It's all that we can do to redirect people's energy, anxiety and wanting to keep themselves and others safe to the activities we know are really impactful—like staying home, wearing a mask when you're out in public, washing your hands and keeping frequently touched surfaces clean."

©2020 Chicago Tribune

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Gloves may do more harm than good when it comes to protecting you from COVID-19 (2020, July 28) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-07-gloves-good-covid-.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--