

Major medical groups urge Americans to wear face masks

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(HealthDay)—Three major medical groups are urging Americans to

wear face masks, wash their hands and practice social distancing as coronavirus cases continue to surge in the United States.

In an [open letter](#) to the public released Monday, the groups noted that stay-at-home orders and other social distancing policies curbed the spread of COVID-19 in the spring.

"But in the weeks since states began reopening, some of the steps that were critical to the progress we made were too quickly abandoned. And we are now watching in [real-time](#) as a dramatic uptick in COVID-19 cases is erasing our hard-won gains," stated the letter from the American Medical Association, the American Hospital Association, and American Nurses Association.

"Hospitals in some states are at or nearing their ICU capacity. Shortages of personal protective equipment and testing supplies continue to pose a dire threat to [health care workers](#) and patients alike," the letter said.

"And last week, Dr. Anthony Fauci told Congress that the U.S. could see 100,000 new coronavirus cases each day if we do not take more precautions.

"This is why as physicians, nurses, hospital and health system leaders, researchers and [public health experts](#), we are urging the American public to take the simple steps we know will help stop the spread of the virus: wearing a face mask, maintaining physical distancing, and washing hands," the letter advised.

The time to do so is now: The United States set another record for the seven-day rolling average of new cases for the 27th day in a row on Sunday, with 48,000 new infections. More than 2.9 million Americans have now been infected. At the same time, coronavirus-related hospitalizations rose to their highest levels to date in Arizona and Nevada.

But Americans "are not powerless in this public health crisis, and we can defeat it in the same way we defeated previous threats to public health—by allowing science and evidence to shape our decisions and inform our actions," the groups said.

"But what is certain—and what the science and evidence are telling us—is that COVID-19 is not behind us and we must resist confusing re-opening with returning to normalcy. Doing so will escalate this crisis and result in more suffering and death," the letter warned.

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

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