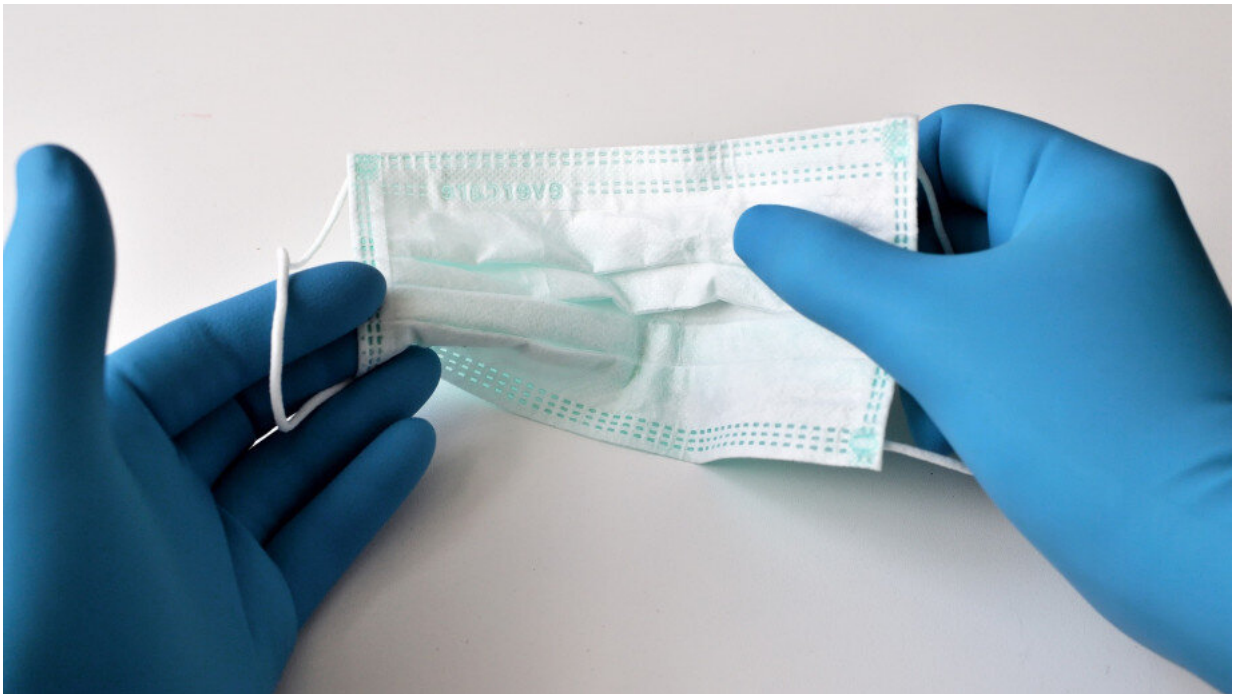


Gut instinct could see you fall for COVID misinformation

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Credit: Pixabay

People who think based on their first instincts are more likely to believe and share COVID-19 misinformation, according to new research from The Australian National University (ANU).

The study compared intuitive thinkers, those who tend to make decisions on immediate instinct, with reflective thinkers, those who stop and

reflect on the accuracy of information presented to them.

As part of the study, 742 Australians were shown a mix of five already-debunked COVID-19 claims and five accurate statements from public health authorities. The participants were then asked to complete a short test of their thinking style.

Lead author, ANU Ph.D. researcher Matthew Nurse, said Australians who provided intuitive yet false answers on the thinking style test were significantly worse at discerning between the accurate statements and the [misinformation](#).

"Viral misinformation about COVID-19 has spread just like the virus itself," Mr Nurse said.

"Knowing that a reliance on intuition might be at least partly responsible for the spread of COVID-19 misinformation gives science communicators important clues about how to respond to this challenge.

"For example, simply reminding people to take their time and think through dodgy claims could help people reject misinformation and hopefully prevent them from following ineffective or dangerous advice.

"Encouraging people to think twice before sharing might slow down the spread of false claims too."

The research has been published in the journal *Memory and Cognition* and aligns with similar research conducted in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada.

More information: Matthew S. Nurse et al, Analytic thinking predicts accuracy ratings and willingness to share COVID-19 misinformation in Australia, *Memory & Cognition* (2021). [DOI:](#)

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Provided by Australian National University

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