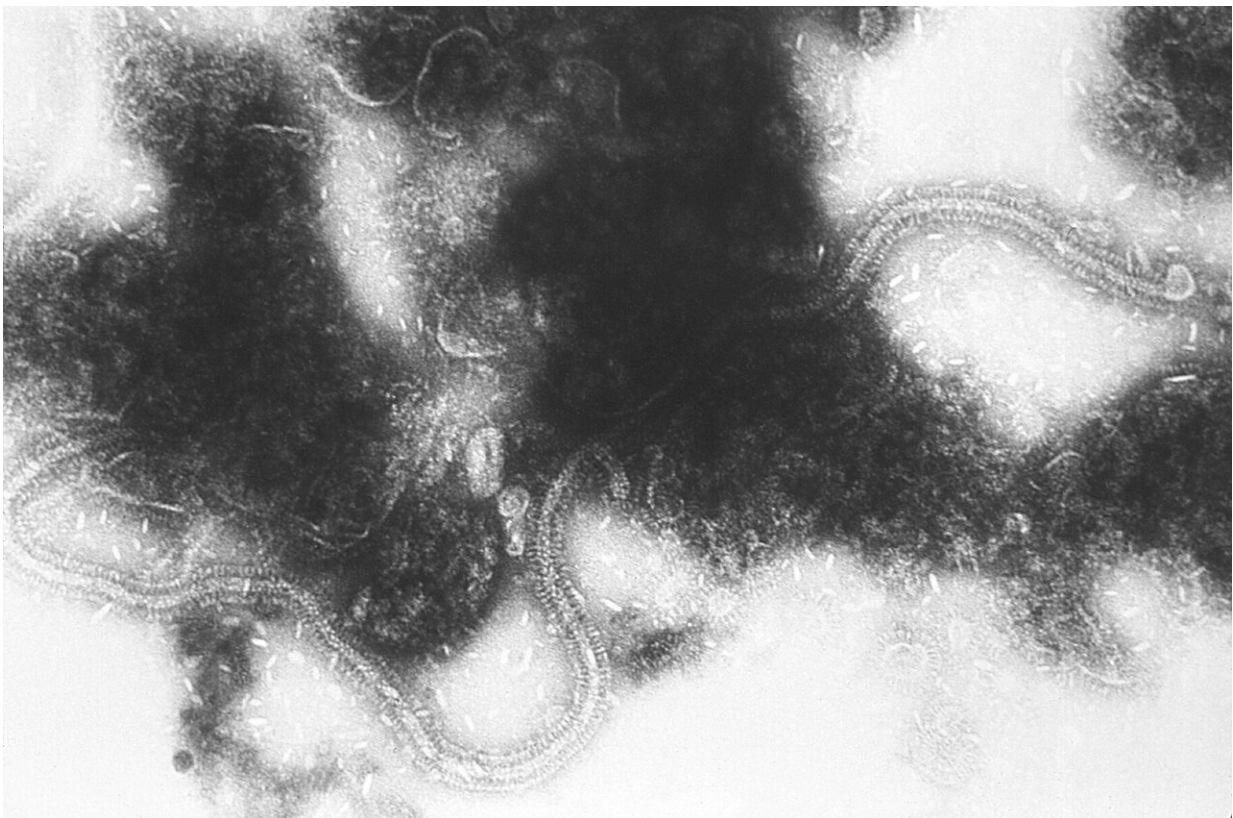


Masking and social distancing during pandemic stopped spread of flu and RSV during 2020 cold and flu season

October 8 2021



Transmission electron micrograph of RSV. Credit: CDC/ Dr. Erskine Palmer / Public Domain

Influenza infects up to 15% of the world population each year, a killer of

medically vulnerable children and older adults, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) causes about 300,000 emergency room visits a year in the United States. New research shows that COVID-19 masking requirements prevented these annual viral infections.

The study abstract, "The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Social Distancing and Mask Mandates on the Prevalence of Influenza and RSV During Their Peak Season," to be presented at the virtual American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition, examined the impact of masking and social distancing practices used to control the spread of COVID-19. Researchers in Ohio found these measures reduced the spread of flu by 99%, and they found absolutely no cases of RSV in the Northern Ohio research region.

"Numbers don't lie. Face masking, and proper hygiene and isolation can be effective means to protect the [vulnerable groups](#), such as the elderly and [young children](#) during the respiratory virus season," said Osama El-Assal, MD, Ph.D., the abstract author and a pediatric emergency medicine physician at Akron Children's Hospital. "It can be a simple non-medicinal way to save lives."

The research was conducted at Akron Children's in Ohio during the peak respiratory season from October 2020 through April 2021. Mandatory social distancing in Ohio during the COVID outbreak created a unique opportunity to study the effects of these precautions on the spread of influenza and RSV during their predicted peak seasons.

During the study period, when there were masking and social distancing measures in Ohio, researchers found that there were no cases of influenza A and RSV, and just two cases of influenza B. After March 14, 2021, social distancing requirements were relaxed in Ohio, and viral infections like RSV returned. They concluded that social distancing and mask mandates are effective tools to reduce the rates of potentially

serious infections like influenza and RSV in children.

Dr. El-Assal will present the study abstract at 10:46 a.m. Central Saturday, October 9, 2021.

More information: Abstract Title: The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Social Distancing and Mask Mandates on the Prevalence of Influenza and RSV During Their Peak Season

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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