

Question From A Mail Centre Part-Time Late Shift Worker

I am writing in response to your recent email dated 5th November 2020 (Introduction of 'Mandatory' Face Masks From Monday 9th November).

Although I am fully exempt from wearing a face mask due to Asthma, I would like to raise a few points of consideration with you.

As soon as I heard the potential that masks could be made mandatory, I decided to test them out with a family member. I clipped an oximeter on to their finger, and got a reading of 99% spo2 (blood oxygen), and a normal heart rate of about 75. When a surgical mask was placed over their face, I monitored their blood oxygen levels. After about 15 minutes, their blood oxygen began to drop from 99% down to 93% (hypoxemia) (the oximeter gave an audible warning). This made me very concerned about what sort of impact the masks could have on people at work, particularly on those do intensive jobs while wearing a mask for an 8 hour shift. Some people may be unaffected, while others may be walking around with reduced oxygen levels without realizing.

A recent study on the impact of how masks affect blood oxygen levels proclaimed it had no impact. However, the study only focused on healthy people at a resting heart rate, far removed from the busy Christmas shift in Royal Mail. Decades of older randomly controlled trials done on surgeons showed a lowered oxygen level, and other studies where people wore a mask and did moderate exercise also showed a drop in oxygen levels.

My question is, since the mandatory use of masks was enforced by Royal mail long before the Government had even discussed doing so, who is liable if anyone were to develop health problems linked to wearing them?

When masking was voluntary, but 'strongly encouraged' by the Union, most people who could wear them, were already doing so. And those that could not, were not. Now that masks are mandatory, people that cannot tolerate wearing them due to intensive work, will simply wear them incorrectly in order to be able to breathe properly while lifting heavy packets, or bags. This defeats the intended objective. I'm also aware of people with health problems that still try to wear them in order to 'fit in'. Such people also wear them improperly.

Furthermore, I heard the shift manager making a mail centre announcement from the Book room to all staff, reminding everyone to make sure they wore their masks on Monday the 9th November. Where was the part about those who may have had underlying health problems? Where was the clear announcement about those who were unable to wear a mask being exempt for health reasons? Do you think such an announcement that ignores the disabled and unwell is good for our working environment? Are you aware that we currently have workers who are disabled, have hidden disabilities, and pregnant women that may, or may not be able to wear a mask?

I note you state the rising numbers of cases, some of the statistics of hospital visits, or ventilator use (all of these statistics are currently being challenged in the media for their accuracy). I fail to see the usefulness of this. Most people are already watching the news, and most people are already afraid, or report feeling hopeless and worried. Creating additional anxiety simply serves to lower immunity further, and raise stress hormone levels, potentially increasing the risk of the virus even more. As a Health, Safety & Environment Officer, you have a unique opportunity to ease the fears of the people, promote and raise awareness of health and strength, and provide solutions to the challenges we currently face.

In all of the communications from the Union and yourself about COVID-19, I did not see anything about the importance of nutrition, mental wellbeing, immunity or becoming stronger. What I observed was a similar recitation of the national news, doom, gloom and fear.

COVID-19 is dangerous because it can trigger a cytokine storm (overactive immune response). This occurs significantly more in people who are low in vitamin D3. So as many of our workforce are working indoors, all of us are at risk of vitamin D3 deficiency, and this increases our risk of both infection from COVID-19 (with a more likely serious outcome), and increases our risk of being infected with the flu.

Clinical trials on 76 COVID-19 patients found that those who had sufficient vitamin D3 had a 2% chance of being sent to the ICU, and those that did not have sufficient vitamin D3 had a 50% chance of being sent to the ICU. This was the

case even for the over 60. Thus young people with low vitamin D3 levels were at a higher risk of death from COVID-19, than the elderly that had sufficient vitamin D3. You can read a summary of the trial here:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0960076020302764>

Where are the communications about the importance of getting adequate D3 (and vitamin K2 a co factor), or other minerals such as vitamin C, to protect all of our staff from COVID-19? They could simply be reminded to talk to their Doctor for advice about this since some are on medication.

I am aware that some are already supplementing with vitamin D3, but many are not. Informing them of the importance of this can ease some of their fears. In fact, adequate vitamin D3 also has a protective effect on the body in the following ways directly when concerning COVID-19:

<https://www.askdrray.com/vitamin-d-helps-combat-the-covid-19-coronavirus/>

- A strengthening of the epithelial barrier not allowing the coronavirus to penetrate into the lung tissue as easily.
- Release of defensins and cathelicidin, two crucial antiviral polypeptides that eradicate any virus in the system.
- Interruption of the “cytokine storm”, which is responsible for viral pneumonia to develop. Without the cytokine storm there is no damage to the lungs and people do not need treatment in the ICU.
- This is particularly important for people above the age of 60 and for people with pre-existing diseases.
- With the stabilizing effect of vitamin D regarding the immune function more severe forms of Covid-19 can turn into less severe forms with a better outcome.

There is also a strong possibility that it reduces viral shedding (droplets). Patients with higher than normal vitamin D blood levels get very few symptoms of COVID-19, and are more likely to survive the virus.

This is because their immune system walls off the virus and releases antibiotic agents to eradicate it from our system. Just imagine the impact on all of our workers if every single one of them was made aware of this, and most were given the go ahead from their Doctors to increase their levels. Many in general are aware that vitamin D3 is good for them, but some do not know that it's use can directly protect them from COVID-19. See this link

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/06/vitamin-d-reduces-covid-19-severity-deaths/>

In summary, the antibodies required to eradicate the COVID-19 virus cannot be produced by our body, unless we have enough vitamin D3 to trigger the production.

I've observed masks potentially increasing the risks of infection. Out of 20 workers in an area only 2 wore them correctly. We are told not to touch our face with our hands to reduce the risk of infection, but 98% of people wearing a mask regularly readjusted the position of the mask on their face. Touched the work area, then touched the mask. Pulled the mask down in order to talk to others. Wore the mask over their chin, had the mask hanging from their ears, and they relaxed their 'social distancing' because they felt safer. I've also observed managers wearing the mask, placing their radio on a potentially contaminated surface, then using the radio with it touching their mask.

There is also a social impact of wearing masks. Many can no longer understand what their fellow colleagues are saying. We are in the business of communication and can no longer do so effectively. After you've asked a person to repeat themselves several times, it simply becomes rude and awkward. Since people cannot understand each other as well while wearing a mask, I see people pulling the masks down to talk, or doing so as a last resort encouraging more droplets to circulate.

Does any of this sound effective?

I have overheard conversations reflecting on what used to be a pleasant working environment which has now become one where people are regularly challenged about not wearing a mask, or simply demanding they wore one.

Without consideration that a person may have a number of reasons behind this decision, there is a possible increase in discrimination, and isolation. A decrease in effective communication, a decrease in productivity, and even poorer group interaction.

I think that if we purely have a focus on statistics, distancing, isolation and fear, we will be repeating the same mistakes the media have made. Would you say that all of your suggestions in the Union email were based on science and a drive to reduce fear, and to raise empowerment?

Nutrition remains something that cannot be ignored, in fact, many believe that it is the true pandemic. Everyone can take steps to change their physical behaviours, but if the virus goes beyond any of those protective methods (all it takes is one mistake), all they have left is their immune system, and immune response. And if they are low on vitamin D3, and other minerals, then they will shed more viruses potentially infecting more people in the workplace, have reduced protection from the replication of the virus in their system, have a higher viral load in their body, and their chances of cytokine storm increases significantly.

If all of us understood and protected ourselves with nutrition, the virus would not be able to cause anywhere near as much harm, or damage.

I've been supplementing with vitamin D3 (and K2) for many months, and have taken other precautions concerning the pandemic. I've written an article here concerning this.

but since its release, I've discovered much more that we can do to protect ourselves. A focus on some of these will help empower our workers, as well as productivity (more energy and health).

<https://monroerealtraining.com/could-improving-my-immune-health-also-combat-covid-19/>

For many years, I've been supplementing with a sea mineral called iodine. Iodine can inactivate the corona virus in just 15 seconds, and when a person's body is iodine sufficient, viruses in the body, on the skin, and in the nasal passages are destroyed!

I also note from the email you are intending on introducing weekly testing. This is not something I'd be interested in, but it's important that such decisions be up to the individual and not forced upon them like the masks have been. After all, we are human beings and must be treated as such! However, the problem with the testing are the high number of false positives. There are many examples of this, one can be found here

<https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/high-rate-false-positive-covid-19146082>

" A survey has shown that nearly a third of care homes have experienced a test which has been a false positive in the last two weeks."

If people are being regularly tested, but are still lacking in the nutritional department, then this will only serve to remove much of the workforce while they isolate from a potentially false positive. When they return, they would not be in any more of a better position to resist becoming infected again. If someone tests negative but the result is unreliable, they will no doubt relax and potentially place themselves and others at more risk. Testing, without addressing the immune system, and the core of the real pandemic will not solve anything other than offer a sense of false security. There have also been complaints about delays in test results, with some taking over 2 weeks to be given.

Regardless of how much social distancing we do, or how long we enforce masking, if we continue to ignore the immune system and nutrition, we will not make any real progress. Therefore I urge you to think about, and to remember the sheer importance of this and everything else that I've mentioned. At the very minimum, if everyone is encouraged to talk to their Doctor about this, at least they may make some positive changes to combat COVID-19.

I look forward to your response

Best regards.

Part-time Mail Centre Late Shift worker

From: Corinne Parsons
Sent: 27 November 2020 15:28
To: Rachel Boon
Subject: RE: Q&A

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for taking the time to write and share your passion for health and wellbeing.

I am sorry that you are not finding our communications useful, we always try to ensure that what we send out is relevant and helpful. Thank you for sharing your research and internet page which I read with interest. It is a good idea to put some comms out covering the contribution of good diet and vitamins to boost immunity. We do and will feature this in our comms throughout the year.

There are lots of pros and cons to mandatory wearing of face masks which we considered before deciding to make wearing mandatory and we recognise the points that you raise, however, on balance the evidence is that wearing face coverings reduces the spread of COVID and our aim is to keep employees safe. My experience of visiting offices prior to the mandatory introduction was very different from yours, I visited a number of sites and in some cases I was the only person wearing a face covering and at best I saw only a handful. Since the introduction, the majority of people have been wearing masks.

We check that any masks that are purchased meet the EU/BS standards which includes a measure of breathability, people are free to wear their own face covering if they prefer. Most people can accommodate to a level of hypoxia physiologically and by pacing themselves, if they are having difficulties they should speak to their manager.

Thanks,

Dr Corinne Parsons
Occupational Health & Ergonomics Manager
Royal Mail Group Safety, Health and Environment



Regards
Rachel Boon
Group Head of Health and Wellbeing
Royal Mail Group Safety, Health and Environment

