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# What Does the Future of Masks Look Like?

## Ashley Hagar, Staff Reporter

After over a year of wearing masks and abiding by COVID-19 protocols, there seems to be hope in the near future of some precautionary guidelines lifting. On April 27, the Center For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that fully vaccinated people can be outdoors without a mask, as long as they are not in a large crowd. With this announcement and more people receiving vaccinations, students are hopeful that a sense of normalcy is just around the corner.

When the CDC announces that masks are no longer mandated at all, it will inevitably raise the question of what Americans should do with their masks. After a year of accumulation, many masks will be left over after the pandemic. Will people repurpose them? Could masks be completely eliminated from our lives? Will people keep them in case of emergencies?

Second-year Sports and Exercise Science major, Tom Topinka, says he will keep all of his masks in case he needs them in the future. After a trip to Japan before COVID-19 started, Topinka saw others wearing masks and wondered why people were wearing them.

"I thought maybe it was just some weird fashion trend," Topinka said. "What I didn't realize until the pandemic was how much safer it was wearing a mask, especially seeing how it can help prevent or lower the risks of others from getting sick even though it may not seem ideal to wear all the time."

While Topinka will keep his masks to prevent him from spreading colds or other sicknesses in the future, some might turn them into something creative. Sean Ishikawa, second-year biology student, mentioned how he could potentially make something out of them with his family.

"My sister is really creative. I bet she would want to use all of the masks from my family to make a big quilt or even a shirt," Ishikawa said. "I would definitely plan on keeping my masks if my sister didn't use all of them for her projects."

As the end of the pandemic is seemingly possible in the U.S., there is excitement and some hesitation about not having to wear masks in daily life. While masks have the potential to be upcycled into the newest fashion trend that goes viral on TikTok, some are not so sure how comfortable they will feel when grocery shopping without a mask anymore.

Second-year Criminal Justice major Jennifer Huffman, has some hesitation about the end of the pandemic. While she trusts the CDC to decide whether or not it is safe, she is weary of how it will feel to go maskless in crowded public spaces.

"I'm trusting that the CDC saying masks are not required is safe, but we've become so used to wearing them that it would feel so weird not to. The first thing I grab when I'm leaving is my mask, so it will definitely take time to readjust," Huffman said.

Desiree Hernandez, second-year nursing student, is also nervous about what the future will look like without masks. While she is eager to return to what life looked like before COVID-19, Hernandez is hesitant to do so without the proper guidance.

"We've been wearing them for so long now, I'm not even sure what to expect," Hernandez said. "I know it will look a lot different than it does now. I just hope we only stop wearing them when it is fully safe to do so."

As Americans see the return to normalcy starting to take effect, many look forward to putting their masks away. Whether they keep them in a drawer for later or try to create something out of the fabrics, people will find a way to do something good with their masks.



Jordie Simpson