

“What If Some People Don’t Wear A Mask” Webinar Transcript

Hello, my name is Kylie Tray. I'm a member of the ASERT Western Region team working on the AidinPA resources. Today I'll be interviewing doctors Venkat and Migyanka, about what you should do if some people don't wear a mask. This webinar is geared towards self-advocates, but it can be helpful to all members of our community. So let's get started.

Doctor Venkat, can you start off by explaining why we should wear masks?

The Centers for Disease Control says that you could spread COVID-19 to others, even if you do not feel sick when you wear a mask, you do it to protect other people. In case you are infected, everyone should wear a mask in public and when around people who do not live in your house. Remember, keeping 6 feet between yourself and others is important. Even when wearing a mask, wearing mask is not a substitute for social distancing.

And when and where should you wear a mask?

So there are a number of places where everyone should wear a mask. Some examples include public places like grocery stores, your workplace, social gatherings, closed, indoor settings, including schools and places of worship. If you are living in a cramped or crowded space and in specific settings such as camp like settings, shelters or homes with more than one family living in the same house. Using public transportation like a bus, plane or train, at work, if you are in close contact or potential close contact with others, and when you are around people who have a higher risk if they get COVID-19. This includes people over 60 years old. People with underlying conditions like heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease, cancer or strokes or those who have a lower immune system.

Great, thank you. Now let's give it to Doctor Migyanka. What should we do if someone near us is not wearing a mask?

You're probably gonna see some people who choose not to wear mask, or they may be unable to wear a mask because of a medical condition. And when that happens, this can make us feel uncomfortable or scared for our wellbeing, or even a little bit angry. You want to tell the person to wear a mask, and some people might be OK. If you do, ask them to wear mask, but others could become very angry or aggressive. They could even get verbally abusive, swear at you, or try to hit you. So it's really best not to try and make some wear a mask. If it all possible, you should just move away from them to a place where you feel safer.

And what are some do's for encountering someone who won't wear a mask?

So if you're very comfortable with the person maybe they're a family member or a really close friend. You can start by acknowledging what it is that the person is OK with when it comes to wearing a mask, you also might want to approach them by saying something like "I know the mask makes it feel like it's harder for you to breathe," so that you would knowledge their feelings. You wanna use “I” statements about how it makes you feel. For example, you can say "I feel uncomfortable comfortable mentioning this, but I'm concerned because" or "I feel protected when you wear your mask." If it's yourself or family member that you want to protect. Do ask them to at least wear a mask when in contact with you or the family member. For example, you can say "Do what you want other times, but can we agree that you wear a mask when you visit me or dad?" If you don't know the person, or they're a stranger, try to face

away or turn your back until they pass. Or if you're in a public place such as a store, talk to a manager or someone in charge and explain your discomfort. Keep in mind that not all of the public places are following the same guidelines.

And on the other end, what are some do nots for handling someone who won't wear a mask? Number one do not use public shaming, bullying, or threatening to try to change the person thoughts or behaviors concerning wearing a mask. And do not attempt to force anyone who appears upset or violent. Follow the COVID-19 prevention strategies like wear mask. If you ask someone to please stand back or please stand away from you and they won't, or it's not possible to keep 6 feet away from them then you should leave. Do not approach someone if you yourself are feeling angry, anxious, or fearful because that person may become defensive or angry with you in return. And do not put you or your family in an upsetting or potentially dangerous situation. If you're uncomfortable with the lack of someone wearing a mask or the lack of physical distance, you should be prepared to leave that area.

Thank you for that. That's a lot of great information. So as we wrap up today, I want to remind everybody watching that there is an overview of this webinar on AidinPA.org, in the ASERT newsletter, and on our social media platforms. We also welcome you to suggest new webinar topics, ask questions or just say hi via our contact us button, also found on the website. Thanks for watching and have a great day!