

## Talking about masks

By Constance Scrafield

?It really pisses me off!? said the chap on the telephone. ?Nobody was wearing a mask, not even the tellers. There're's a plastic shield in front of the teller but she stepped away from it to hand me my change...?

Sitting at a computer, sorting out the statistics and the news as updated yesterday, with today's numbers on their way in, the news is hopeful and bad.

World-wide, Coronavirus infections are still increasing with nearly five million cases, around the globe. In the USA, the numbers are 1,550,000 and this number is likely to increase as individual states open up and people go about ?business as usual.? Meanwhile, the White House calls for the Canadian/American border to open are being met by Canadian wisdom and Justin Trudeau saying, ?Not yet, Mr. President.?

The thought and the prayer that, here in Canada, there is some relief, may also be the edge of wishful thinking, if we are careless about how we begin to go back to business. Stores in Orangeville and Dufferin, that have been closed for months, longing to see old friends and regular customers back in their places, are taking extraordinary precautions to keep everyone safe, using imaginative ways to accommodate the desire for ?normal? with the ever-present reality of danger.

The probable truth is that it is not really safe to open up stores and trails and whatever else ? it probably has not been safe to keep grocery stores and the LCBO open all this time ? but there were no reasonable alternatives because we cannot, actually, do everything online.

The real reason for keeping open the stores that were open and for now re-opening the stores that have been waiting, is to keep morale up; to prevent flagrant disobedience on the part of an extremely compliant and sensible population that has been well-behaved for as long as it can.

Only by exercising every precaution that we can, will this release make any sense and it is sure that authorities are counting on us to do so. Masks are a necessary element of that precaution: while I was reading today's statistics (still terrifying, I may add), I was learning that the curve is not flat, it is just not rising as perpendicularly as it was. In other words, there are still too many new cases but not as many as there were.

Social distancing, washing hands and wearing masks is helping to make that difference. In my morning research, I was hunting out the facts and information about masks.

It has been said, over and over, that wearing masks is essential for preventing respiratory infections. COVID-19 aka Coronavirus is a respiratory infection and disease.

My research promoted cloth masks for several reasons but added cautionary notes, along with recommendations.

Cloth masks can be made a home with mainly cotton cloth, meaning they are easy to come by. They can be thoroughly washed and reused, after each time they are worn. They must be securely tied by ear hoops or ties. While wearing them, it is important not to touch the front of the mask and, if you do, wash or sanitize your hands immediately.

Substituting a mask with a scarf or coat collar is not the same because you touch both, with your hands, to keep them in place and you will not remember or not know to sanitize your hands every time you touch your scarf or collar.

In addition, you may well not understand the necessity of washing the scarf or coat collar after every time you go out. What

infection you have kept from your mouth and nose while you were out, you are bringing home and maybe, not washing it away immediately from your scarf or coat collar.

Cloth masks are better than surgical masks which do not give effective protection. It is important to note that once a mask has been removed, it is imperative to clean your hands immediately. Putting the mask in a plastic bag and bringing it home to wash it immediately is essential.

Don't touch your face.

If you do your own research about this because you don't believe me, please stick to the science. My research was based on information from medical sites, including [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca). This last is not in love with homemade masks. It does, however, offer instructions on how to make them.

There are so many opinions and feelings about COVID-19. How to deal with it; how to keep safe from it. You have worked hard, stayed home, home-schooled your kids, which must have been a steep learning for everyone. Surely, now, it is not too much to agree to simple but needed steps to continue to keep the virus at bay. This danger has not passed.

Don't be fooled by the mistaken gathering of (mask-less) crowds in parks and elsewhere, that all is well. They are tempting fate by their carelessness and we should all remember that COVID-19 can kill.