

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes
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Should We Wear a Mask Proactively? — A Survival Revelation from an Ancient Chinese Fable

As concerning the current global and Chinese epidemic trends, wearing a mask is essential for the public to prevent COVID-19 virus in China. In order to restore a normal life, on May 21, National health Commission of the People's Republic of China (NHC of China) has promulgated a refined policy, "*Guidelines for Public Science Wearing Masks (Revised)*"¹, to further guide people on how to/when wear suitable masks.

For the majority, wearing a surgical mask is enough for protect against the virus in most common situations. Actually, it's very uncomfortable especially when the temperatures are relatively high, but it's a safety barrier to our health and our lives; thus, when we go to a crowded or confined space (such as shopping malls, supermarkets or common elevators, public toilets), wearing a mask is necessary. We should see ourselves as the most important participants and the biggest beneficiaries of public health, so we should take expert advice--wear mask. In other word, under this special situation, we need to work with medical experts, government to co-build a safe, harmonious and orderly living world with "One Health"² concept, rather to resist or despise it.

Modern China is a country that highly identifies with the power and value of science, so people are more receptive to scientific advice. Meanwhile, China is also an ancient country rich in coexistence wisdom, so the question of "whether masks should be wear?" can be understand as public participation in scientific practice, but also can understand as how to coexist more intelligently with others.

¹ <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/jkj/s5898bm/202005/2d89c552f9804f39bb4f44a9d826b2cd.shtml>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/index.html>

In ancient China, there was a two-parts allegorical saying to mock futility—“A blind man lights a candle—Such behavior is wasteful”. But there is another fable version of the same story with survival wisdom, called “The Blind Man Lights a Lantern while Walks in the Night”.

A blind man is always in the habit of carrying a large lantern when he travels at night. Many people were puzzled and asked him, “Why are you lighting lanterns? You can't see anything, you can only hold on your tactile stick.”

The blind man replied, “Day and night is no difference to me, but when I carry a lantern while walking in the night, it's for the sake of everyone. As for my own, carrying a lantern provides me with protection, it can allow people to notice my movement slowly and avoid bumping me from a distance; as for others, I carrying a lantern can shine a light on them and let them walk more securely”.

In the present, we should learn the kind of survival wisdom of the blind man in the story. To wear a mask proactively does not mean “I'm infected with the virus”, rather to protect my own health. At the same time, it is a reminder to others that we are still in a time of crisis, we need to pay highly attention to our health and life safety very seriously.

