

Narratives on face mask wearing from members of Navigating Knowledge Landscapes Network - the contribution No. 3

Country: **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

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Official report of Public health authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina on date May 14th, 2020 recorded - less than 2% of total amount of population of Bosnia and Herzegovina (current number approximately -3,2 million). And, also, B&H is on 3rd place within South-Eastern Europe countries regarding the morbidity rate of COVID-19. It is relatively low rate if we compare it with other countries in Europe.

The rule of conduct in the open issued by the Health Ministry and Disease Control Centre of the Public Health Institutes of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH, stated in Sarajevo city), Republic of Serbska (stated in Banja Luka city) and District Brčko (stated in Brčko city). Following the instructions of the relevant Crisis Staffs, Ministry of Health and local authorities in all cantons of FBiH (FBiH has 10 cantons and every Canton has own Ministry of health as a part of Cantonal government) or entity (BiH has two entities: FBiH and Republic of Serbska, also with separate Ministry of health and Public health institutes) proposed general (and officialy) measures: social distancing, strictly requires face mask wearing, covering nose and mouth, as well as gloves wearing.

Regarding proposed preventive measures described in this text all citizens in our country use mask, but in praxis different types of the material quality, depends of that they both it by itself (with price from 0.5 to 3.0 euros) or given by official institutions engaged in health care protections, or given as donations from other countries. Medical professionals use masks with much better quality and also expensive (20-30 euros, even much expensive). In my personal opinion wearing of masks, particularly those which has incorporated with filter, is useful method for the virus transmission prevention.

In general, persons I met in the street were wearing masks. Around 98 % of people wore masks in the street. Among them around 75 % wore masks properly, and 25 % wore masks improperly, on their necks, or covering only their mouths, but not noses. Over 50 % of people use masks improperly. They do not know how to put the mask on and when they remove their masks, they touch the outside of the mask, which is inappropriate and wrong. One should not think twice but respect the instructions of health professionals. Most or almost all countries in the world recommend mask wearing and it should be respected.

I believe that even the training in mask wearing is necessary because some people got infected and also transmitted COVID 19 exactly because improper use of protective face masks.

References

Masic I, Naser N, Zildzic M. Public Health Aspect of COVID-19 Infection with Focus on Cardiovascular Diseases. Mater Sociomed. 2020 Mar; 32(1): 71-76. doi: 10.5455/msm.2020.32.71-76.

N.B. Attached the text of proposals of preventive measures against COVID-19 infection for people with high/higher risk - who already have some of common chronic diseases

To avoid and to reduce the risk of COVID-19 virus infection, all relevant European, US and World institutions recommend the following:

- Continue to take regularly prescribed medications and follow medical advice;
- Provide monthly medication supplies or longer if possible;
- Keep at least one meter away from people who have a cough, cold or flu;
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Stay at home - self-isolation;
- If you are forced to exit, be sure to put on a face mask and protective gloves on your hands;
- While outside try to avoid touching surfaces or objects as much as possible, keep a distance of at least 1 meter and avoid unnecessary social contact with others;
- Follow the instructions of the relevant Crisis Staffs, Ministry of Health and local authorities in your canton or entity;

- Keep track of your health status. If you experience symptoms (shortness of breath, fever, and cough), call a competent epidemiological service or family physician immediately. Explain to them that you are calling them in connection with the new coronavirus and that you are at high risk for COVID-19 virus corona infection;

- Remember to protect your mental health and well-being as well. If you need to stay home for an extended period of time, try to maintain a daily routine that prioritizes taking care of yourself. Read books, play games designed to raise mental health levels, listen to light music, watch entertaining TV shows, or listen to the radio.

Self-isolation or quarantine can influence people to adopt unhealthy eating habits. To avoid stress and exhaustion, be sure to stick to your daily schedule and lead a healthy lifestyle:

- Keep exercising, eat a balanced diet, stay hydrated and get some sleep, sleep is very important in the fight against infection;

- Maintain your social contact remotely and communicate regularly with friends and family;

- Limit the data you consume about the time you spend on the virus corona epidemic, and only trust reliable and official sources;

- Avoid consuming alcohol, smoking cigarettes, energy drinks and narcotics;

WHO recommends 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of high intensity physical activity per week, or a combination of both. These recommendations can still be achieved even at home:

- Take short active breaks throughout the day;

- Follow physical training classes on youtube or the internet;

- Take a walk, stand up and relax inside the living space.