

## CORONAVIRUS UPDATE - AUGUST 2020

As last month, North Walsham U3A is not holding any face to face meetings at the moment. However, more than half of our interest groups are now meeting virtually online and/or staying in touch by email. It isn't the same as meeting face to face, but it does seem to work reasonably well once people get used to it.

If any of your groups aren't yet using technology to keep working together, and you think they might be able to, please do the following:

1. Talk to other members of your group about it.
2. Try to identify someone in the group who could act as a Zoom 'host' (who can be the Group Leader, but doesn't need to be).
3. Ask Peter and/or Richard for advice if you want to, or send your query through the contact page on our website at [www.northwalshamu3a.org/contact-us](http://www.northwalshamu3a.org/contact-us).

Third Age Trust volunteers are hosting tutorials covering an introduction to Zoom and how to host virtual meetings. You can book at [www.u3a.org.uk/about/events/online-events](http://www.u3a.org.uk/about/events/online-events).

North Walsham U3A is reimbursing the costs of Group Leaders' Zoom subscriptions. To get the best value for the cost of those, the committee is asking anyone whose Zoom subscription is being paid for to:

- Hold virtual meetings of all groups that they lead where this is possible
- Be prepared to act as Zoom hosts for other groups they are members of.

We are also offering a virtual monthly General Meeting at 3.00pm on the first Friday of each month. Details of the one on 7 August will be emailed separately to members who have email addresses.

The government's key advice taken from its coronavirus website is as follows:

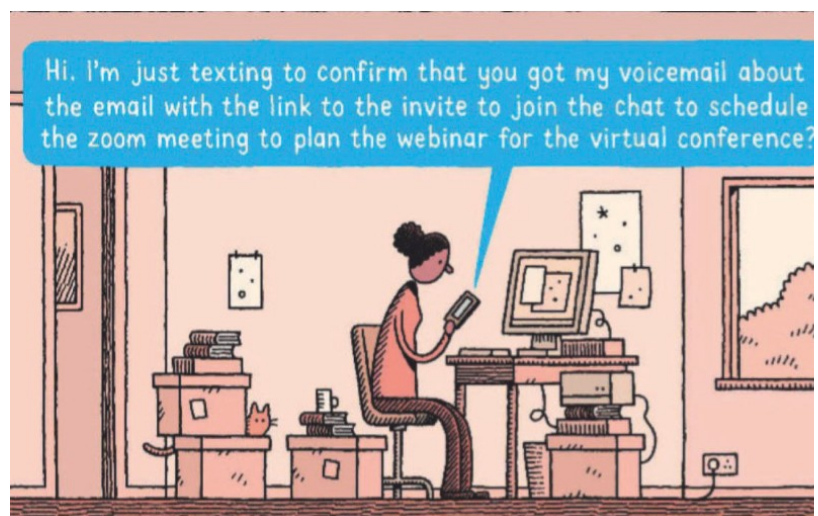
- Stay at home as much as possible.
- Work from home if you can.
- Limit contact with other people.
- Keep your distance from people not in your household (2 metres apart where possible).
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Don't leave home if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.

At the same time, many retail, leisure and hospitality businesses have reopened recently and more are likely to follow in the month ahead. Various precautions are being taken in these places to reduce the spread of the coronavirus, including a new requirement for customers to wear face coverings in shops and takeaways.

If you are finding all the dos and don'ts a bit complicated, you are not alone. As if to illustrate this, John Harris-Hall found this cartoon and I thought I would share it with you all.

You can find detailed, up to date information about government rules and advice at:

[www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)



## Scam Warning

A coronavirus scam is being attempted by people who ring you up claiming to be from the NHS Covid-19 tracing team. They ask for your address to send a test to, and then ask you to pay a small fee for the test using your credit card – just like a prescription charge.

Once they have got your credit card details, they will either charge a much higher amount to the card themselves or sell your details on to someone else.

A genuine contact tracer will know your name, or at least, they will know the name given to them by whoever has tested positive for coronavirus. If they don't know your name, be on your guard. A genuine contact tracer will ask you to self-isolate for 14 days and will probably ask you about any symptoms you have. If they start asking for any other information, be on your guard.

And if you do need a test because you are showing symptoms, it is completely free. **If they ask you for money, it's a scam.** Hang up.

## Coronavirus False Information

The Government have released a new checklist to help protect yourself and your friends from false information about coronavirus. When shared, false information can take on a life of its own and have some serious consequences. It can lead to health scares, false accusations and potentially damaging hoax stories. Recently there has been a lot of this kind of false information about coronavirus. It is not always easy to spot, so use the SHARE checklist to make sure that the information can be relied upon:

**Source:** Rely on official sources for medical and safety information. Check the facts about coronavirus on the [NHS](#) website and [GOV.UK](#).

**Headline:** Headlines don't always tell the full story. Always read to the end before you share articles about coronavirus.

**Analyse:** Analyse the facts. If something sounds unbelievable, it very well might be. Independent fact-checking services are correcting false information about coronavirus every day.

**Retouched:** Watch out for misleading pictures and videos in stories about coronavirus. They might be edited or show an unrelated place or event. Check to see who else is using the photo.

**Error:** Look out for mistakes. Typos and other errors might mean the information is false. Official guidance about coronavirus will always have been carefully checked.

More information is available at <https://sharechecklist.gov.uk>.

## Late News from Another U3A Group Emerging from Lockdown!

The Psychology group have decided to study the Oedipus complex, but don't want others to know. Mum's the word.

The Wine-Tasting Group are learning about cooking with German wine. It is an add hock approach.

The Flora and Fauna Group laughed so much at their relaunch picnic and now have butterflies in their stomachs.

The True Crime Group is following a serious crime at IKEA where the police are struggling to put the pieces together

The French Holidays Group is taking new members. They have vacancies.

The Foodies Group bought up the entire stock of dressed Cromer crab. How shellfish.

The Bridge group refused to watch the monthly Zoom talk about the American President. A strong no trump.

The Photography Group are in the dark - room for improvement.

The Architecture Group is doing a course at foundation level.

The Chess Group are playing in shifts to catch up. No-one wants to do knights.

The Local History Group met a potential new member, a local dentist. He didn't like the look of their blue plaque.

The Book Group had a problem with the fonts. What a lot of Dingbats.

The Archaeology Group had a joint meeting with the Jazz Group. They are digging it.

### **Everything You Need To Know About Face Masks, But May Have Been Afraid To Ask! (with thanks to the Independent, 17/7/20)**

#### ***What to know before buying a face mask***

The government has been careful to distinguish between face coverings and masks in its guidelines, and has been clear that the general public should not be buying medical face masks, as these need to be reserved for frontline staff and key workers only.

Medical masks and face coverings differ in their effectiveness. Trish Greenhalgh, Professor of Primary Care Health Sciences at the University of Oxford, told The Independent: “Many infections are spread by droplets, which are relatively large when they first come out as a cough or a sneeze, but become much smaller as they travel through the air. The job of a cloth face covering isn’t to protect the wearer, but to block the source of infection (what’s known as ‘source control’).”

“The main benefit is most of your germs will be caught in it, making you less of an infection risk to others. My mask protects you; yours protects me,” she adds.

The WHO has created a series of videos and infographics to show people how to use face coverings properly. Before wearing your mask your hands should be clean and while wearing it, you should not touch your face or adjust the mask. Doing this can transfer virus particles from the outside to your mouth and nose.

Taking your mask on and off should only be done by unlooping the straps from behind your ears and once you have removed it, store it in a clean, plastic reusable bag and wash your hands. When taking the mask out of the plastic bag, touch only the straps.

#### ***What to consider before buying a face covering***

**Glasses:** If you wear glasses, you should go for a tie face covering so you can adjust the fit of it so it sits tightly across your nose, or look for a mask made with a nose clip. This will limit glasses from steaming up.

**Facial hair:** For people with facial hair, like beards or a moustache, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has warned that facial hair may interfere with the effectiveness of face masks. If you are not willing to go clean-shaven, make sure that the hair fits inside of the mask.

**Hearing difficulty:** As face masks cover your mouth, it makes it difficult for deaf people, and those who have hearing problems and communicate through lip-reading to know what you are saying. It also limits understanding based on facial expressions. If you or someone you know is struggling with this, London-based charity Action on Hearing Loss has created an information card with tips for people with hearing loss and advice for the general public. They include: reducing background noise as much as possible, writing things down with a pen on paper or on mobiles, and using simple gestures such as pointing or waving. Face coverings with clear panels are available so people can read lips and expressions more easily.

**How often you will need to wear it:** If you will be going on public transport every day, buy a pack of masks so you are not washing just one every day to reuse. If you are buying for your family, ensure that there is enough for everybody as masks should not be shared, in order to reduce the risk of transmission.

**How it should fit:** For a face mask to be effective, it must fit over the bridge of your nose, past the edges of your mouth to under the chin, without restricting your normal head movements. You should be able to breathe comfortably while wearing it.

**Fabrics:** You will also want a mask made in a fabric that is soft enough to sit on your skin without any discomfort. The more uncomfortable you are, the more likely it is you will touch your face or fiddle with it.

### *Different types of face coverings*

Face coverings can be made from things you have already got at home. However, face coverings can also be bought pre-made online and in shops, as retailers respond to the increasing demand.

**Cotton masks:** These are typically designed in either a pleated or moulded design to better fit your face, and are lightweight. To ensure you are as protected as possible, look for cotton masks that have a built-in filter or a pocket which you can add a filter too. They are also soft enough to be comfortable on sensitive skin.

**Linen masks:** As linen is not an easy environment for germs to breed, it is used by some companies for its natural antibacterial properties.

**Synthetic fibres:** You may find some masks made from combinations of materials, such as polypropylene (the same material used for medical masks) with a cotton lining to make them comfortable against your skin when worn for long periods of time.

**Tie masks:** Some masks are made with ties, rather than elastic straps. This means it is easier to secure your mask to your face shape, just ensure they are properly adjusted to avoid touching your face.

**Elasticated ear loops:** Many masks have elasticated ear loops to help them fit snugly behind your ears, but most elastic loops cannot be adjusted.

**Filters:** Some masks have built-in filters or a filter pocket for you to replace them yourself and dispose of after each use. If your mask is reusable, you will need to remove the filter before putting it in the washing machine.

**Nose wires:** Some masks have a built-in metal or plastic wire that sits across the bridge of your nose. This is designed to provide a snug fit and limit how much it moves when you are wearing it.

**Transparent:** Face coverings with transparent panels made from clear vinyl help other people see your mouth to lip read, and are available from [Etsy](#).

### *Where to buy face coverings*

Since the beginning of lockdown, many businesses have pivoted their production to manufacturing face masks, along with individuals creating their own via retailers such as [Etsy](#). Other larger retailers who have launched cloth face masks include [Mango](#) and [Asos](#), along with independent brands including [Aeibe](#), [Newt](#), [Just Hype](#), [Florence Bridge](#), [Plumo](#) and [Wawa Clothing](#).

Prices range from a couple of pounds for basic styles up to £50 for higher-end masks from luxury labels. Keep in mind that due to the pandemic deliveries may be delayed.

At [Contrado](#), you can buy a four-pack of masks for £15 and even design your own artwork to decorate them. If you are not feeling creative, you can also shop designs that are already made. The masks are available in small, medium, large or extra-large, so pick the size you want and you will get four of the same in your pack. It describes the fabric of the masks as high-quality and breathable, lasting up to 100 washes, but advises not to tumble dry.

Alice Cox, a freelance theatre prop maker and set designer, started creating bespoke face masks from old designer fabrics from her spare room in Kennington, London. She has designed them with a pocket large enough to fit a filter and non-elastic band that will minimise irritation around your ears. To place an order, email your choice of colour and material to [alicecoxcreative@gmail.com](mailto:alicecoxcreative@gmail.com). One mask will cost you £10, unless you want the liberty-printed style, which is £15.

For £13, [Good Ordering](#) is selling [reusable face covers](#) made from two layers of 100 per cent natural fabric, with at least one layer that is densely woven for more protection and elastic straps, which also allows you to insert a filter on the inside. All the fabrics used to make the face covers are made from recycled or remnants of material in collaboration with a local costume professional, and while it washes the fabrics at a high temperature before production, Good Ordering advises to wash the product before use too.

You will find [adult and kids masks](#) available in Rachel Riley's signature prints of flowers, gingham and more. Each one costs £19 and they are suitable for children aged three and above, and the same designs are available for adults, so you can match if you like. They are made with a cotton satin lining, polyester inner layer and cotton outer layer. It will also be donating 10 per cent of profits from the sales of its face coverings to [Best Beginnings](#), a UK charity that supports parents during pregnancy and the early stages of parenthood.

In a surprising turn, stationery brand [Vistaprint](#) has manufactured a range of kids and adults face masks, costing £13 each. There is plenty of kid-friendly fabrics to choose from including colourful doodles, khaki green, baby pink, stripes, lightning bolts and hearts. Every mask comes with a replaceable filter system that can be rewashed, a 100 per cent cotton anti-allergenic inner layer, a three-dimensional chin structure, adjustable straps and a nose bridge. For every reusable mask bought, Vistaprint is also pledging to give 10 per cent of sales to local communities impacted by the pandemic.

### ***How to wash face coverings***

To keep your mask as clean as possible, WHO recommends washing it once a day, using soap or detergent, with hot water. Most reusable fabric masks in materials like cotton and linen are machine washable, but make sure to check the label. According to the [CDC](#), you should use "the warmest appropriate water setting and dry items completely". A hot wash is recommended, so 60°C or higher. If your mask comes with a filter you can remove, ensure you bin it before washing.

## **And Now Probably More Than You Wanted To Know About Hand Sanitiser...**

**(Adapted from an article on the 'Which?' website, 5/5/20)**

### ***Why soap and alcohol gel work against coronavirus***

It is all about the type of virus we are dealing with. Covid -19 is an enveloped virus. This means that the RNA (nucleic acid – the viral genetic material) is coated in a lipid (fatty) layer. Soap is able to dissolve this lipid layer, causing the virus to fall apart and stopping it from binding to our cells. Alcohol-based hand sanitisers work in a similar way, inactivating the virus by breaking down the lipid layer.

### ***Does it matter which hand sanitiser you buy?***

You have probably seen that you need at least 60% alcohol content for hand sanitiser to work properly. Dr Primrose Freestone, Associate Professor in clinical microbiology at the University of Leicester, explains that this is because 60-95% alcohol content is the level needed for it to work to inactivate viruses including Covid-19. Most alcohol-based hand sanitiser gels contain one or more alcohols: ethanol, isopropanol, or a combination of the two. You can check the label to see how much it contains. We checked the main high street brands and Carex has the highest alcohol content, according to the information on the label: Carex hand gel contains 70% alcohol, Cuticura hand gel contains 66% ethanol and Dettol hand gel contains 63% ethanol.

### ***Do alcohol-free hand sanitisers work?***

Alcohol-free hand sanitisers are usually foams. They can be gentler on the skin, but the scientific evidence varies more for alcohol-free products than it does for sanitisers containing alcohol. Dr Freestone explained to us that [alcohol-free sanitisers] tend to work better against bacteria and viruses such as norovirus, reiterating it is 'alcohol, detergents, hydrogen peroxide, extremes of pH and bleach that inactivate Covid -19. Other chemical compounds have varying efficacy, but it is harder to be sure.



### ***How is medical-grade hand sanitiser different and do I need it?***

Medical grade sanitisers, such as Defendol, usually have around 70% alcohol, and will have been tested to show specific pathogen-killing efficacy relevant to hospital settings. But Dr Freestone says the average person shouldn't need to seek this out, as standard alcohol gels are still effective. Hospitals and medical environments understandably need protection that has been certified for high-risk environments, so it is best to leave this for those who really need it.

### ***Can you make your own hand sanitiser?***

You can theoretically make your own, by mixing 3/4 cup of rubbing alcohol with 1/4 cup of aloe vera, but it is not really advisable. Anything homemade is obviously not laboratory validated to the standard of commercial hand sanitisers. You would need to ensure you use sterilized containers and source some isopropyl or rubbing alcohol. This is 99%, so that bottle of vodka on the shelf won't do the trick.

### ***Are antibacterial wipes the same as hand sanitiser?***

Some pharmacy chains have been redirecting customers to stocks of antibacterial wipes when their hand gel stocks are out. But is it really the same thing? Dr Freestone says: 'Wipes tend to have less alcohol and more antibacterial compounds such as benzalkonium chloride (used in Wet Ones), as well as water and wetting (detergent and surfactant) agents. Before buying the wipes, you should check the range of pathogens the wipe is active against by searching the back of the packet, or checking the active ingredients online.' These types of wipes, along with antiseptic creams such as Savlon or Germolene, tend to be more antibacterial than antiviral, as they are designed to work on the skin where bacteria are (usually) the main skin pathogens.

### ***Soap: does it matter if it's bar, liquid or antibacterial?***

As with hand sanitiser, you may be happy to go with whatever soap you can find on the shelf. And it turns out, there is no need to be too discriminating. If it foams, it will do the job. The good news is this means there are alternative options if you can't find any soap nearby.

### ***Bar vs liquid soap – what's the difference?***

Liquid soap and solid soaps have different ingredient formulations, but the principle of their mechanism of cleaning action is the same, so it doesn't matter which you buy. Broadly, traditional solid soap bars tend to be made from a combination of fat or oil, water and an alkali substance such as lye. Liquid soap, or hand wash, is made from synthetic detergents, such as sodium lauryl ether sulfate instead. Ideally, choose one with moisturising agents, as this will help to offset frequent hand washing. Most modern hand soaps will include these, though.

### ***Is antibacterial soap better?***

There is no need to pay extra for or hunt down products that carry specific 'antibacterial' claims on their label. As Dr Freestone says: 'The detergents and surfactants (wetting agents that reduce the surface tension of water) in any type of soap are innately antibacterial in that they remove surface-attached bacteria and viruses.' So your soap may not call itself 'Germ Shield' or similar, but it will still do the same job as long as you wash your hands in the proper way.

### ***Can you wash your hands with shower gel or shampoo instead?***

If you are really struggling to find hand soap, this is probably the next best thing. Dr Freestone says: 'All detergents work similarly and many hand or body cleaning products have some of the same agents present as hand soap. For example, sodium lauryl ether sulfate is found in shampoo, shower gel and washing-up liquid (although this might be harsher on your skin, as it is designed for tough grease on dishes).'

### ***Should you wear latex gloves when out and about?***

Like with surgical masks, Public Health England and the NHS have not recommended the use of surgical or latex gloves as a protective measure for the general public against Covid-19. While it is true that gloves provide a barrier between your hands and other surfaces, they might give people a false sense of security, can be wasteful as they need to be disposed of after use, and hand washing is a better preventative measure anyway. Prolonged wear may also irritate your hands.

*And finally, be aware...*

- As long as you wash your hands after contact with the outside world and avoid touching your face before you have done this, you shouldn't need to worry too much about hand gel.
- The pitfalls of hand sanitiser are that it doesn't work as well on sweaty, greasy or visibly dirty hands, and you need to use a lot to completely cover the entire surface of your hands. Repeated use of alcohol-based hand sanitiser can irritate your skin, too, despite many containing moisturising agents
- Beware of profiteering on online marketplaces – we found some listings on Amazon and eBay selling regular hand sanitiser at wildly inflated prices. You should also exercise caution when using online marketplaces – previous 'Which?' investigations have uncovered a high number of products that don't pass safety standards

*Steve*