

Wear a mask to workout?

By Gina Elrod, Group Fitness Fan,

AFAA Fitness Instructor and Personal Fitness Trainer

Covid-19 – ick – so many things have changed including gym workouts. As a longtime group fitness fan, I missed the camaraderie and energy of moving with friends. When NC started in phase 2.5, I wanted to know more about working out with a mask so I did some research. Though NC is now in phase 3 gyms are still operating under phase 2.5, which calls for 30% capacity, 6' social distance, and mask unless vigorously exercising, with the definition of vigorous left ambiguous. I've been a certified Group Fitness Instructor and Personal Fitness Trainer since 2004 with A.F.A.A. (Aerobics and Fitness Association of America) so that seemed a good place to start. NASM (National Academy of Sports Medicine) recently acquired AFAA and I found this informative article on their website <https://blog.nasm.org/covid-19-guidance-for-personal-trainers>. Further investigation led me to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) which cautioned that staying away from a sedentary lifestyle is essential, especially in these troubled times of a global pandemic to reverse the ill effects associated with the health risks of a weakened immune system. Though NIH cautions about exercising in a N95 mask fitted snugly to your face, the consensus is 6' spacing coupled with wearing a mask is a good way to get back into a fitness class. The American Council on Exercise (ACE) also concludes that most people can perform their regular workouts while wearing a face covering, protecting everyone present from virus spread. ACE does caution that, as always, it is essential to remind exercise enthusiasts to monitor how they feel during the workout and to take particular notice if they feel dizzy, lightheaded, or short of breath. If so, slow down/reduce exercise intensity and or stop exercising until these symptoms go away. These symptoms (i.e., dizziness, lightheadedness, shortness of breath) during exercise may also reflect several health conditions including the following: overexertion (particularly if a person hasn't worked out for some time or at his or her usual intensity levels, due to stay-at-home rules), dehydration, low blood pressure, low blood glucose, heart arrhythmia (sometimes exercise triggers an irregular heart rhythm) or lack of oxygen. Spend time googling wearing a mask while exercising for more information and tips.

Since I want to take every precaution not want to make anyone sick, I decided to try working out in a mask. After logging in over 30 hours of vigorous masked exercise, I can report it is a good option to safely get back to group workouts. Just for grins, I checked out this month Cosmo magazine article on the benefits of wearing a mask. My favorite: You won't run out of lip gloss for a long time.