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Health Division **חטיבת הבריאות**
אגף השירות | תחום חופש המידע
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18 Kislev, 5782

22/11/2021

Reference: 1155433721

Application number: 646460

Shulamit Blank

(Indicate application number in your response)

To: Adv. Shilo Gadi
gadi@cbalaw.co.il

Shalom Rav,

SUBJ: Request for information under the Freedom of Information Law - Opinion regarding the imposition of a mask obligation

In your application, you requested the opinion and documents submitted to the Director General of the Ministry of Health regarding the imposition of the obligation to wear masks as of 2020.

After clarifying with the professional authorities in this office, here is our answer —

Below are excerpts from **The Team for Treating Epidemics [TTTE]** discussions from 30 Mar 2020, 01 Apr 2020, which discuss the imposition of the obligation to wear masks. Also attached -

1. Position paper prepared by Prof. Yehuda Carmeli, Director of the National Center for Infection Prevention and Antibiotic Resistance Integrative experts mentioned in the TTTE discussions and the position paper.
2. A presentation prepared by an integrative group of experts mentioned in the TTTE discussions and in the position paper. It will be clarified that the attached presentation redacted one sentence and also removed a number of slides dealing with the issue of purchasing masks that were not requested in the information request and contain commercial information in accordance with section 9 (b) (4) of the Freedom of Information Act.

From the summary of the TTTE discussion from 30 Mar 2020 —

5. Masks for everyone:

- 5.1. A presentation was presented for discussion by a group of operatives: Prof. Ronit Calderon, Prof. Doron Gazit, Miriam Bokobza, Sarel Cohen, Dr. Amit Ben Kish, Daniel Lev and Ran Ahituv. The presentation describes the experience of several countries in which they have taken this approach — according to them, a process which led to the leveling of the infection curve, accompanied by a reference.

Service Division
Freedom of information
P.O.B 1176 Jerusalem 91010
call.habriut@moh.health.gov.il
Tel: *5400 **Fax:** 02-5655971



אגף השירות
תחום חופש המידע
ת.ד. 1176 ירושלים 91010
call.habriut@moh.health.gov.il
טל: *5400 **פקס:** 02-5655971



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- 5.2. On the one hand, the position was expressed that wearing masks has an educational message as part of maintaining hygiene and social distance and can reduce risk in crowds like supermarkets. It also has a psychological effect on the other hand. In the absence of a professional or factual basis, the TTTE will have a hard time coming out with a recommendation to walk around with masks. There is no well-founded scientific proof that the mask reduced morbidity.
- 5.3. Studies on the subject are of a poor standard and the issue creates inconvenience as there is no strong scientific basis for the new policy. It seems that a mask gives protection but the numbers are average and do not constitute scientific proof of effectiveness. Therefore, even if logic says there is some kind of protection in it it is important to set standards.
- 5.4. The concern has been expressed that if the public uses masks universally as a result of the recommendation of the TTTE, there may arise[### error - invalid inline graphic ###] excess confidence in the public in masks resulting in a decrease in responsiveness to maintain social distance.
- 5.5. An argument made in the presentation that improvised fabric masks can be used requires in-depth examination because there is a concern that the fabric absorbs a lot of moisture, which lowers its effectiveness as a filter.
- 5.6. If it is decided to take such an approach in Israel, there must be no shortage of medical staff and visitors to hospitals and clinics in the community, where the risk of exposure in the coming weeks is greater. The masks must be managed as a national resource and the recommendation of the TTTE is to ensure protection for patients and caregivers in the health system. The standardized masks must be reserved for medical staff and high-exposure workers with a high-risk population.
- 5.7. There is doubt about the effectiveness of using a mask to prevent infection and it is probably with environmental protection of one [sort] upon the other. Also, improvised solutions described in the presentation — T-shirt fabrics — can possibly improve the infection rate in the environment of a public space.
- 5.8. One of the proposals raised was to examine the use of masks for the general public as a means of escaping or reducing the need for a stricter lockdown.



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- 5.9. It is agreed that to the extent recommended, the mask should be an integral part of a number of actions:
- 5.9.1. Giving an explanation as to why the recommendation was made and that the public be aware that there is no evidence that it prevents infection.
 - 5.9.2. Adherence to hygiene, in-depth and intensive information and perceptual change in this aspect.
 - 5.9.3. Extreme care for social distance (2 meters and more).
- 5.10. It was agreed that the members of the TTTE would delve deeper into the contents of the presentation and the references presented, and the issue would be raised again in the next discussion. At this stage, there are no operational recommendations.

From the summary of the TTTE discussion from 01 Apr 2020 —

6. Masks

- 6.1. Prof. Yehuda Carmeli presented guidelines to the general population:
- 6.1.1. Public space workers who come in contact with people for more than 15 minutes at a distance of two meters will wear a mask.
 - 6.1.2. An improvised mask can be employed.
 - 6.1.3. Reusable fabric masks are recommended in the document.
 - 6.1.4. N95 masks are not intended for the general population, but for medical staff.
 - 6.1.5. Use should be made in a place of concentrated populations.
 - 6.1.6. As for the general public, there is still a position that it [the mask] is unfounded. On the other hand it is reasonable in a personal way that it makes sense and the public is declaring their intention and ideology using real deeds and not just words.



- 6.1.7. It is important to explain that a surgical mask gives quite good protection when two people in close proximity to each other wear it. There is no prohibition against making a mask independently and it can be washed. It should be explained to the public that only together with the other means can this be effective.
- 6.1.8. People with heart and lung impairments should consult their family doctor so that he does not develop difficulty breathing.
- 6.1.9. **** — he believes that a change in policy may confuse the public and it is necessary to decide, and also so that the perception will be clear to the public.
- 6.1.10. **** — It is important to make sure that wearing masks will not cause harm and also be aware that the harm may outweigh the benefit. There is also the importance of the psychological aspect that gives people a false sense of security.
- 6.1.11. There is agreement on the importance of producing masks for medical personnel. Masks intended for the public, which can be washed, should be separate and it should be as part of getting back to a routine of life.
- 6.1.12. Since the Ministry of Health will recommend this in the coming days, it is agreed that a recommendation of guidelines for the public should be written.
- 6.1.13. Indicate in the recommendations that N95 masks with exhaust valves are not good and forbidden to use. It is important to generate a connection to this matter in the explanation.
- 6.1.14. Emphasize that it is required in a place with crowd concentrations. Otherwise it will be difficult and will produce a problem of responsiveness.
- 6.1.15. **** — In China it [the muzzle] has not been proven to be effective. It is difficult to imagine this thing happening in the Israel Army for sure, certainly if standardized masks are not being spoken about.



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I would like to inform you that according to section 17 of the Freedom of Information Law, you have the opportunity to appeal against this decision to the Jerusalem Administrative Court, within 45 days.

Sincerely,

Attorney Shulamit Blank,
Supervisor for the Public Information Unit

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