

Behind the mask

From acne to rashes, prolonged use of face masks is leading to skin problems among many people. Health experts decode the reason and suggest tips

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IN just six months, masks have become an inseparable part of our daily apparel. Coupled with hand hygiene and distancing, masks have been declared our first line of defence against the virus, helping curb community spread. However, as more and more Indians step out wearing the protective layer, bracing dust, heat and humidity, they are encountering some new problems: breakouts, rashes and itching, say doctors.

Reaction to sweat

Dr Vandana Punjabi, consultant dermatologist and cosmetologist at Nanavati Super Speciality Hospital, shares that on an average, at least two in 10 patients report these problems daily. She

says that the mask-related skin issues are usually of two types — dry, itchy rashes and acne — both primarily caused by sweat. “Owing to the muggy, hot climate, those who wear masks for long hours and travel for work or otherwise, tend to sweat a lot. That sweat doesn’t have an outlet to escape and accu-

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Dr Vandana Punjabi



SKINCARE



Doctors suggest that it's better to change the face mask at least once or upto twice a day, especially if you're exposed to hot or humid conditions; (inset) Dr Vandana Punjabi

mulates under the mask. The sweat works like an allergen for those who have sensitive or dry skin and leads to eczema or rashes,” she explains. For those who have oily or acne-prone skin, the sweat and dust clog the pores beneath the mask, leading to breakouts or “maskne”, she adds.

The rashes and



Using a calamine lotion or good quality aloe vera gel can help

breakouts generally affect the T-zone of the face — the nose, cheeks and mouth area. Although eczema isn’t contagious, the fluid from the rash can spread on your own body. “If the rash gets bad, you keep scratching it and water or serum comes out, that can act as an allergen,” she elaborates.



Dr Tushar Rane, internal medicine expert, Apollo Spectra Hospital, Mumbai, believes that one should ensure that the mask has a snug fit. “It has to cover your nose,



mouth and face, but shouldn’t be too tight,” he says, adding disposable N-95 masks or three-layer surgical masks work best. “One must also follow proper mask hygiene. Constantly touching the face, reusing masks without cleaning them and keeping them in infected places can lead to irritations and put you at risk against the virus,” he shares.



Dr Tushar Rane

Help at hand

Both doctors suggest that those who wear masks for long hours or are aware that they sweat profusely, should change them in between. “The mask should be changed at least once in four hours,” says Dr Rane. Dr Punjabi adds that if you have acne-prone skin, use an appropriate cleanser and those facing a flare of itchy, dry rashes, should use mild cleansers. “Wash your face on reaching work or after working out and change the mask. If the breakout feels too hot, use an ice pack,” she recommends.

One must avoid touching the skin or itching it. “You can apply calming calamine lotion or aloe vera gel. At night, you can also use repair creams or serums. But if it persists or worsens, reach out to a doctor immediately,” she concludes.

An eye on ecology

In an upcoming solo, artist Garima Gupta explores issues of colonisation and exploitation across the Southeast Asian archipelago

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FOR five years, Garima Gupta has been engaged in intensive research across Southeast Asia and parts of Oceania — from studying wildlife hunters in the forests of New Guinea to taxidermy-related trade in Thailand. In 2017, her observations translated into a solo show titled Minutes of the Meeting that included sketches and videos. This week, she’s back with another exhibition at Colaba’s TARQ titled ‘filed under: a/muse/um’.

Primarily exploring, what she refers to as the “roots” and “shoots”

of wildlife trade in the region, the visual format of the show leans on the work from her previous solo. “Back then, I had exhibited pages from a notebook I carried around for my research work across Southeast Asia and New Guinea. But by the time ‘filed under: a/muse/um’ was already on the horizon, I had started questioning the very idea of notebooks,” she shares over email.

So, who collects information and for what purpose? The list, she says, is an ominous one featuring ethnographers of 16th century mining companies who get a whiff of gold nuggets

down the river and bio-prospectors who ‘stumble upon’ a great new herb that can push the pharma business. They keep the notebooks safe, and not for the public eye. Instead, Gupta decided to open up notebooks, take out pages, and look at them as a puzzle.

The show comprises over 30 drawings. And for Gupta, there are three core messages that she hopes viewers soak in: “That the land and ocean we inhabit are fragile ecospheres, and are interconnected in ways we haven’t fully comprehended; that Newton wasn’t joking when he said that every action (force) in nature has an equal



and opposite reaction, and that this reaction is taking place, right now. We are living it. And if the right measures aren’t put in place, we will see this fragile fabric fray.”

ON October 8 to November 12, 11 am to 5 pm (Wednesday to Saturday, by appointment only) **AT** F35/36, Dhanraj Mahal, Apollo Bunder, Colaba. **LOG ON TO** targ.in



The artworks include (top) Thank you for shopping with us! 01, detail, 2020; (left) Eleais guineensis, 2020; (right) Rothschild’s bird, 2020; (inset) Garima Gupta

