

NEWS

# Fauci Said Masks 'Not Really Effective in Keeping Out Virus,' Email Reveals

**D**r. [Anthony Fauci](#) wrote in February 2020 that store-bought face masks would not be very effective at protecting against the COVID-19 pandemic and advised a traveler not to wear one.

*The Washington Post* and BuzzFeed News have obtained hundreds of pages of Fauci's emails through the Freedom of Information Act, revealing more about the early days of the pandemic.

In one message, Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, replies to an email from Sylvia Burwell, believed to be the Sylvia Burwell who was health and human services secretary for three years under President [Barack Obama](#). Burwell had asked for advice about wearing face masks while traveling. Fauci's reply is dated February 5, 2020, and is available in a document cloud provided by Buzzfeed.

(over)



**Trump Admin Sought Closer  
Taiwan Ties, Wanted Japan to Do  
More on China**

## **NEWSWEEK NEWSLETTER SIGN-UP >**

Fauci wrote: "Masks are really for infected people to prevent them from spreading infection to people who are not infected rather than protecting uninfected people from acquiring infection.

"The typical mask you buy in the drug store is not really effective in keeping out virus, which is small enough to pass through material. It might, however, provide some slight benefit in keep out gross

droplets if someone coughs or sneezes on you."

He added: "I do not recommend that you wear a mask, particularly since you are going to a very low risk location."