

nypost.com

Sweden's disease expert says just wearing face masks could be 'very dangerous'

By Jackie Salo

2-3 minutes

August 19, 2020 | 10:46am | [Updated August 19, 2020 | 12:24pm](#)

Sweden's top infectious disease expert has resisted recommending face masks for the general population — arguing it's "very dangerous" if people believe the coverings alone will stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Anders Tegnell, chief epidemiologist at Sweden's Public Health Agency, has repeatedly expressed skepticism that face masks will control virus outbreaks, [the Financial Times reported](#).

"It is very dangerous to believe face masks would change the game when it comes to COVID-19," said Tegnell, who is considered the country's equivalent of Dr. Anthony Fauci from the White House COVID-19 task force.

He noted that countries with widespread mask compliance, such as Belgium and Spain, were still seeing rising virus rates.

"Face masks can be a complement to other things when other things are safely in place," he said. "But to start with having face masks and then think you can crowd your buses or your shopping malls — that's definitely a mistake."

He completely brushed off the prospect of wearing masks last month, saying, "With numbers diminishing very quickly in Sweden, we see no point in wearing a face mask in Sweden, not even on public transport."

Tegnell has argued that evidence about the effectiveness of face mask use was "astonishingly weak."

"I'm surprised that we don't have more or better studies showing what effect masks actually have," he [told the UK Times](#).

The infectious disease expert has [faced backlash](#) after the nation controversially refused to lock down, leading to a [higher death rate per capita](#) than neighboring countries that took stricter approaches.

Enlarge Image

Sweden's chief epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell

Sweden's chief epidemiologist, Anders TegnellTT NEWS

AGENCY/AFP via Getty Images

Sweden has recorded at least 85,000 cases, including more than 5,800 fatalities, according to the latest figures from Johns Hopkins University.