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6 in 10 'likely to keep to good hygiene, safe habits' after Covid-19: NTU study

This will reduce risks of catching flu and common cold, says expert



Sherlyn Sim

Wearing masks outdoors, using hand sanitiser, avoiding large gatherings and observing safe distancing are practices many Singaporeans will keep to when Covid-19 is over, according to a nationwide online study by Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

More than six in 10 of those surveyed said they are likely to take these precautionary measures and practise good hygiene and habits even when the pandemic is under control.

The study of 1,606 people was commissioned by the university's Centre for Information Integrity and the Internet (IN-cube).

The average age of the respondents was 40, and about half of them were male.

The poll, carried out last month, was part of a larger survey tracking Singapore residents during the Covid-19 outbreak to understand the pandemic's long-term effects on their social behaviour, said Associate Professor Edson Tandoc Jr, the director of IN-cube, yesterday. IN-cube is a new research centre at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information that was set up to promote integrity in online spaces.

Nearly seven in 10 in the study said they will continue to engage in social distancing and avoid places with large gatherings, and only three in 10 said they are likely to attend mass events like concerts.

About 64 per cent said they will continue to wear masks when outdoors, two-thirds said they will consistently use hand sanitiser, while more than 60 per cent said they will still use videoconferencing tools for work or study after the pandemic.

Commenting on the survey findings, Dr Leong Hoe Nam, an infectious diseases specialist from Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital, commended Singaporeans' willingness to adopt good hygiene habits even after Singapore emerges from the pandemic.

"This will reduce the risks of catching influenza and common cold viruses, he said.

"Wearing face masks has dramatically reduced respiratory tract infections, and practising good hand



Wearing masks outdoors (above) and observing safe distancing (left) are among the practices that many Singapore residents will keep to when the Covid-19 pandemic is over, according to a nationwide online study conducted last month by Nanyang Technological University. ST PHOTOS: KUA CHEE SIONG, TIMOTHY DAVID

hygiene will reduce multi-drug-resistant bacteria.

"I'm glad to see these habits often practised in the hospital taken into the community," he said.

"If you feel unwell or cannot afford to fall sick due to work or an exam even after Covid-19, wearing a mask is the best way to look after yourself."

NTU student A. Aravind, 24, said he has been looking forward to the end of Covid-19, but will still willingly wear a face mask after that.

CONTINUING WITH GOOD PRACTICES

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NTU STUDENT A. ARAVIND

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"During the pandemic, I realised using hand sanitiser is quite a manageable way to ensure good hygiene."

Research administration trainee Wong Jing Hui from NTU's Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine told The Straits Times that she will continue to wear a mask when unwell and use hand sanitiser

frequently after the pandemic.

"One of the things the pandemic has made known to us is how infectious a cough or sneeze can be.

"We're also all aware of how many germs there can be on common touch points," she said.

"Knowing this, it will be hard to go back to just walking around without a mask if I am sick, because now I am aware of how quickly I can pass my flu to someone else."

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