

Some turn to silver face masks because of antimicrobial effects



AUSTIN, Texas — Americans are slowly getting vaccinated against COVID-19, but face masks and hand sanitizers are here to stay for at least the rest of this year. Now, some companies are advertising silver products as a "natural" alternative.

At Celebrity Skin, a skincare clinic in Scottsdale, Arizona, all the staff wear face masks made with silver.

"When I heard about this, I thought it made perfect sense," said Celebrity Skin owner Jennifer Swink.

Swink was first introduced to the concept years ago when a doctor prescribed a silver ointment to prevent infection after getting serious burns on her hands. Now, at her clinic, face masks are an important safety precaution, and she trusts those made with silver.

"The client doesn't have anything over their face because I'm working on their face, so it's very important --for them and myself-- to have something on," she said.

Tru47 is a four-year-old company selling a variety of silver-incorporated products from sprays to face masks.

"This one here which is sort of a pleated style, but it opens all up," said Tru47 founder Sharon Whiteley as she showcased the masks over Zoom.

According to Whiteley, silver-based products are popular among people wanting to invest in a durable, reusable mask or avoid alcohol-based sanitizers.

While a \$50 investment, she said their masks, made of pure, woven silver, will last a lifetime, and never need to be washed because silver is a natural antimicrobial.

"We are just taking that base element and converting it into products that can be useful," Whiteley said.

Research published last fall by the National Institutes of Health found "silver coated masks have been found to be effective in inhibiting COVID-19."

As have silver-incorporated poly cotton fabrics and "silver-based sanitizers and disinfectants."

"The observation is that these metals are antimicrobial in nature," explained Bryan Davies, an associate professor in the department of molecular bio sciences at the University of Texas at Austin.

Davies said silver, copper and gold have all been explored for their ability to fight bacteria and viruses.

"Do we know what it is about these metals that gives them antimicrobial properties?" asked CBS Austin. "The short answer is no. The longer answer is-- there are theories," he said.

While scientists don't know exactly how silver works as an antimicrobial—there is evidence it can be effective.

"Certain forms of these metals are able to kill bacteria and the theories to-date are that they will stick to the membranes-- so the outside surfaces of these organisms-- and break them down," Davies explained.

Silver face masks like the ones made by Tru47 aren't medical-grade or CDC approved to protect against COVID-19.

"We do not make any claims. We never would. Quite frankly, we don't think anyone can make any claims about the virus," said Whitely.

Still, those who've used them personally and professionally throughout the pandemic say they're happy putting their trust in silver.

"For me it made perfect sense," said Swink.

To read more from the NIH about silver in face masks, [click here](#).