

thehealthyamerican.org

A website that has published false claims about the purported health risks of wearing masks and other measures believed to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

Score: 22.5/100

Ownership and Financing

TheHealthyAmerican.org does not clearly disclose its ownership. However, Peggy Hall, a holistic health advocate, identifies herself as the website's founder on her personal Facebook page and in a biography posted on TheHealthyAmerican.org.

The website was registered in May 2020 through a domain service that conceals owners' identities.

Hall says in her biography that she has run four other businesses, including Living Swell with Peggy Hall, a company that creates holistic wellness programs and products for companies in Southern California; and Yoga for Surfers, an instructional DVD yoga series. Hall also provided commentary on health trends for "Hits & Favorites," a syndicated ABC Radio show, between 2007 and 2015. According to the website's Contact page, TheHealthyAmerican.org is based in San Clemente, California.

TheHealthyAmerican.org does not run advertisements. Prompts to donate can be found on several pages. Hall writes on the website's Peggy's Story page, "your support helps keep this ship afloat...your donations are non-deductible, but they are an investment in your future, your children's future, and the future of our country."

-  Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
-  Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
-  Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
-  Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
-  Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
-  Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
-  Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
-  The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

On its What We Do page, TheHealthyAmerican.org says that its mission is "to educate, inform and inspire others to take action to live life fully — and freely — by defending our God-given rights as protected by the Constitution." On an About Masks page, the site asserts that "science says healthy people should not wear masks" and quotes Hall as saying, "How can a person be forced by any business or government entity to wear

a mask (which affects the respiratory system) without having a physical exam by a licensed doctor who approves such an action?"

Most content on TheHealthyAmerican.org promotes the defiance of public orders and guidance to wear masks in public places. On a Research & Laws page, the website names the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) under a list of "Laws Protecting Your Right NOT to Wear a Mask in Public," stating, "public entities, including grocery stores, cannot discriminate based on disability."

Sections on the site include Resources, MASKS, LETTERS, OSHA, Schools, Videos, and Print Outs. The MASKS section includes pages such as About Masks, CDC Mask Deception, and Masks Don't Work.

The site's Resources section links readers to public agencies and representatives who they can contact to write letters questioning the use of masks and other health measures relating to COVID-19. Hall also publishes form letters for users to send to government officials.

The website has also published a printable "medical condition card" that purportedly exempts users from having to wear a mask into a business establishment based on the fact that "a licensed medical professional is the only person qualified to give medical advice, including the advice to wear a mask," and "practicing medicine without a license is an offense punishable by law."

Videos featuring Hall, including "HOW TO STOP OPPRESSIVE GOVT," "HOW TO NOT WEAR A MASK IN PUBLIC," and "The Breath of Life is a Gift from God. Don't obscure it" are archived in the site's Videos section.

Credibility

TheHealthyAmerican.org regularly makes false and pseudoscientific claims about the safety of face coverings as a protective measure during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

On a page titled Masks Don't Work, for example, the website falsely asserted that "masks reduce intake of oxygen, leading to carbon dioxide toxicity," without providing any evidence to back the claim. The claim is repeated in a number of places on the site, including on printable cards that claim masks "reduce intake of oxygen."

The World Health Organization notes on its website that "the prolonged use of medical masks, when properly worn, DOES NOT cause CO2 intoxication nor oxygen deficiency." The Cleveland Clinic says on its website that "while inhaling high levels of carbon dioxide is dangerous, this is very unlikely to happen from wearing a cloth face mask." The American Lung Association noted in a June 2020 blog post on its website that cloth masks "are designed to be breathed through and there is no evidence that low oxygen levels occur."

Multiple scientific studies, including a June 2020 study published in *The Lancet*, an April 2020 study in *Nature Medicine*, and a May 2020 study in *BMJ Global Health*, have concluded that the usage of face masks can curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The Masks Don't Work page also claimed that wearing a mask means "germs are trapped near your mouth and nose, increasing risk of infection." The website supported this claim by citing an article by Dr. Russell Blaylock, a retired neurosurgeon who in May 2020 wrote an article for *Technocracy.news* titled "Blaylock: Face Masks Pose Serious Risks To The Healthy." In the story, Blaylock claimed, without evidence, that "by wearing a mask, the exhaled viruses will not be able to escape and will concentrate in the nasal passages, enter the olfactory nerves and travel into the brain."

Sarah Stanley, an infectious diseases professor at the University of California, Berkeley, told *The Associated Press* in May 2020 that Blaylock's claim is false.

"Breathing out the virus is not going to appreciably change the amount that is there," Stanley told *The AP*. "Therefore, there should be no reason why wearing a mask would increase your chance of infection in the brain." The University of Nebraska Medical Center writes on its website that "the idea that wearing a mask

after you've been exposed to COVID-19 will increase your level of infection is a myth. There is no evidence to support this self-contamination claim.”

TheHealthyAmerican.org has misrepresented statements of government agencies and health experts to advance claims that masks are not necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

For example, on the Masks Don't Work page, the website claimed that “science says healthy people should not wear masks.” To back its claim, it published a tweet from U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, saying “Masks are not effective in preventing the general public from catching coronavirus,” and a statement from National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci, saying, “People should not be walking around wearing masks. Masks do not provide the protection people think they do.”

While the website accurately quoted Fauci and Adams, it failed to say that the experts made their statements in the earlier stages of the pandemic, and before the government changed its guidance to recommend that the general public wear face coverings to prevent the spread of the virus.

Adams' statement appeared in a February 2020 tweet from his account. Fauci said that “masks do not provide the protection people think they do” in a March 2020 interview with CBS' “60 Minutes.” In April 2020 _ a month before TheHealthyAmerican.org launched _ the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention formally advised Americans to wear face coverings in public, citing new data that showed that asymptomatic people could transmit the virus.

Several other health experts have since advised the general public to wear face coverings as protection from potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. The Cleveland Clinic states on its website that “because we don't know for sure who's infected” with the COVID-19 virus, “the best option is for all of us to wear masks.” In a June 2020 article on the University of California San Francisco's website, UCSF epidemiologist Dr. Peter

Chin-Hong said that “I think there’s enough evidence to say that the best benefit is for people who have COVID-19 to protect them from giving COVID-19 to other people, but you’re still going to benefit from wearing a mask if you don’t have COVID-19.”

And in a June 2020 interview with The Street, Fauci said that the public was told to forgo face coverings at the beginning of the pandemic because “we were concerned that it was at a time when personal protective equipment, including the N95 masks and the surgical masks, were in very short supply.”

In addition to its false claims about the safety of masks, the website has made unsubstantiated claims that social distancing is not an effective deterrent to COVID-19. In an undated, public letter addressed to “School Board Members,” Hall wrote, “there is no sound, scientific or medical evidence supporting ‘social distancing’ or any other onerous recommendations (these are not laws, nor are they enforceable by law) such as no sharing of instruction materials or games, etc. There is ZERO science between having students sit in desks 6 feet apart.”

The CDC, which recommends that people stay six feet away from each other in public to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus, says on its website that “limiting close face-to-face contact with others is the best way to reduce the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 ... since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay at least 6 feet away from others when possible.” The WHO, which recommends maintaining a distance of at least three feet in public, explains on its website that this is because “when someone coughs, sneezes, or speaks they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets.”

A CDC study published online in April 2020 suggested that “social distancing interventions can give communities vital time to strengthen healthcare systems and restock medical supplies, but these interventions, if lifted too quickly, will fail to mitigate the current pandemic.”

Because TheHealthyAmerican.org has consistently published false and misleading information, and because it has misrepresented medical experts' statements to advocate against the use of protective measures against the COVID-19 virus, NewsGuard has determined that the website repeatedly publishes false information and does not gather and present information responsibly.

TheHealthyAmerican.org does not list a corrections policy, and NewsGuard was unable to find any corrections on the site.

The Healthy American's What We Do page says the site aims "to educate, inform and inspire others to take action to live life fully — and freely — by defending our God-given rights as protected by the Constitution."

However, the page, as well as a statement outlining its mission, does not disclose its overall views against the use of protective face coverings and social distancing measures intended to curb the spread of COVID-19. The website regularly uses negative language when discussing mask use and publishes only negative claims about face coverings.

For example, a form letter to California state representatives that appears on the website said that "health officers have 'passed the buck' and are breaking California law by not providing reputable evidence in favor of healthy or asymptomatic residents to wear face masks."

On a page titled How to Shop Mask-Free, the site listed a number of American stores without mask mandates, followed by a shorter list titled "MASKS REQUIRED by these rigid, intolerant stores." On another page that covered going into public places, Hall wrote, "I personally do not engage in a conversation with someone wearing a mask. It is offensive to me to try to listen to someone with a muffled voice. I shake my head and point to their mouth to let them know I can't hear or understand them."

Because the website does not centrally disclose its advocacy against the use of face coverings and other government-recommended measures to prevent COVID-19, and because that mission is apparent in its articles and informational pages, NewsGuard has determined that TheHealthyAmerican.org does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Three emails sent by NewsGuard to the website, inquiring about the site's corrections policy, use of opinion content, and examples of false and misleading information, were not returned.

While certain pages on the website have opinionated names — Masks Don't Work and CDC Mask Deception, for example — the majority of headlines on pages and on articles do not repeat the website's false claims. For example, a page that includes several letters to politicians that advance false claims about wearing masks is titled "Letters About Masks."

Transparency

Peggy Hall writes on the site's Peggy's Story page that she "started THE HEALTHY AMERICAN to share the research and links I've uncovered, all with the goal to educate, inform and inspire you to take action to promote truth and freedom." NewsGuard has determined that while this page does meet NewsGuard's standard for revealing who is in charge, it does not clearly disclose the website's owner.

The website does not list any information about who creates content for the website. Its Contact page provides a general email address for TheHealthyAmerican.org, as well as links to the site's social media pages.

The website does not run advertising.

Three emails sent by NewsGuard to TheHealthyAmerican.org, asking about the website's ownership and why information is not provided about its ownership or content creators, were not returned.

History

The domain for TheHealthyAmerican.org was

registered in May 2020. On the Peggy’s Story section of the website, Hall says that she launched the site “to share the research and links I’ve uncovered, all with the goal to educate, inform and inspire you to take action to promote truth and freedom.”

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and Financing

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<https://www.facebook.com/peggy.hall1>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/peggys-story>
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Content

<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/what-we-do>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/peggys-story>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/research-links>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/masks-dont-work>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/where-to-shop>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/medical-condition-card>
<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/letters-about-masks>
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Credibility

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Transparency

<https://www.thehealthyamerican.org/what-we-do>
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History

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