

- Hygiene**Can mouthwash protect against virus?**

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Mouthwash could kill coronavirus, scientists suggest, as they called for research into whether gargling the liquid has a similar effect as it does on flu.

Covid-19 is what is known as an “enveloped” virus, which has an outer fatty membrane. Previous research has suggested that agents found in mouthwash, such as low amounts of ethanol, can potentially disrupt the outer membranes of enveloped viruses.

Scientists at Cardiff University are calling for further research into the role mouthwash could play in reducing the transmission of Covid-19 after conducting a review into previous studies.

A 1995 study found that a flu virus was “significantly impacted” when exposed to 26.9% ethanol with essential oils, while a follow-up study in 2010 determined that a 30-second exposure to 21.6% ethanol led to a near 100% reduction of infectivity of an influenza strain.

“These studies provide proof-of-concept that mouthwashes containing essential oils with 21-27% ethanol can inactivate enveloped viruses, both in the lab and in humans, with the likely mechanism being damage to the lipid envelope,” the researchers wrote.

But the researchers said there had been no discussion about the potential damaging Covid-19’s role in membrane damage as a way to inactivate the virus.

The researchers assessed existing mouthwash formulas for their ability to disrupt the virus and suggested that several deserved clinical evaluation.

Lead author Prof Valerie O’Donnell, co-director of Cardiff University’s Systems Immunity Research Institute, said: “Our review of the literature suggests that research is needed as a matter of urgency to determine potential.”