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Need mask standards to protect the people

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These days, we wear masks to prevent both Covid and air pollution.

But when the air is better, we don't necessarily wear other masks, intended only to ward off the virus. We typically wear one mask type. Since the pandemic, many mask types have sprung up across the country. Some wear only blue single use masks, others flaunt cloth masks, calling them ecofriendly.

What does this mask diversity mean for our health?

The virus cannot be kept out by wearing a cloth mask unless the cotton has other layers inside. As far as air pollution goes, this depends on the specific particle. It is hard for most users to go looking for the correct mask for each usage type.

Nor should a user have to do this. India needs masks standards to guide and protect its people. A mask in India must meet various needs.

It must fight Covid and pollution, sometimes just dust. Workers on a construction site need masks as do young school children. And because this is India, the mask must not suffocate the user in the heat either. Instructions about its disposal should be clear. Standardizing masks is key to public and environmental health, to saving lives. It is also key to using the appropriate resources in the most impactful manner.

The Bureau of Indian Standards must use available data and issue standards to protect lives and prevent the wrong use of materials. We can fight Covid and climate change both, if robust regulation kicks in.