

POLITICS

Vice President Mike Pence tours Mayo Clinic without coronavirus mask even though he was told to wear one

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KEY POINTS

Vice President Mike Pence toured the Mayo Clinic without a mask despite that renowned medical facility requiring all visitors to wear masks to avoid potentially spreading the coronavirus.

Pence, who leads the White House's coronavirus task force, when asked about going maskless said that he is regularly tested for the virus, and so far has been shown to be negative for it.

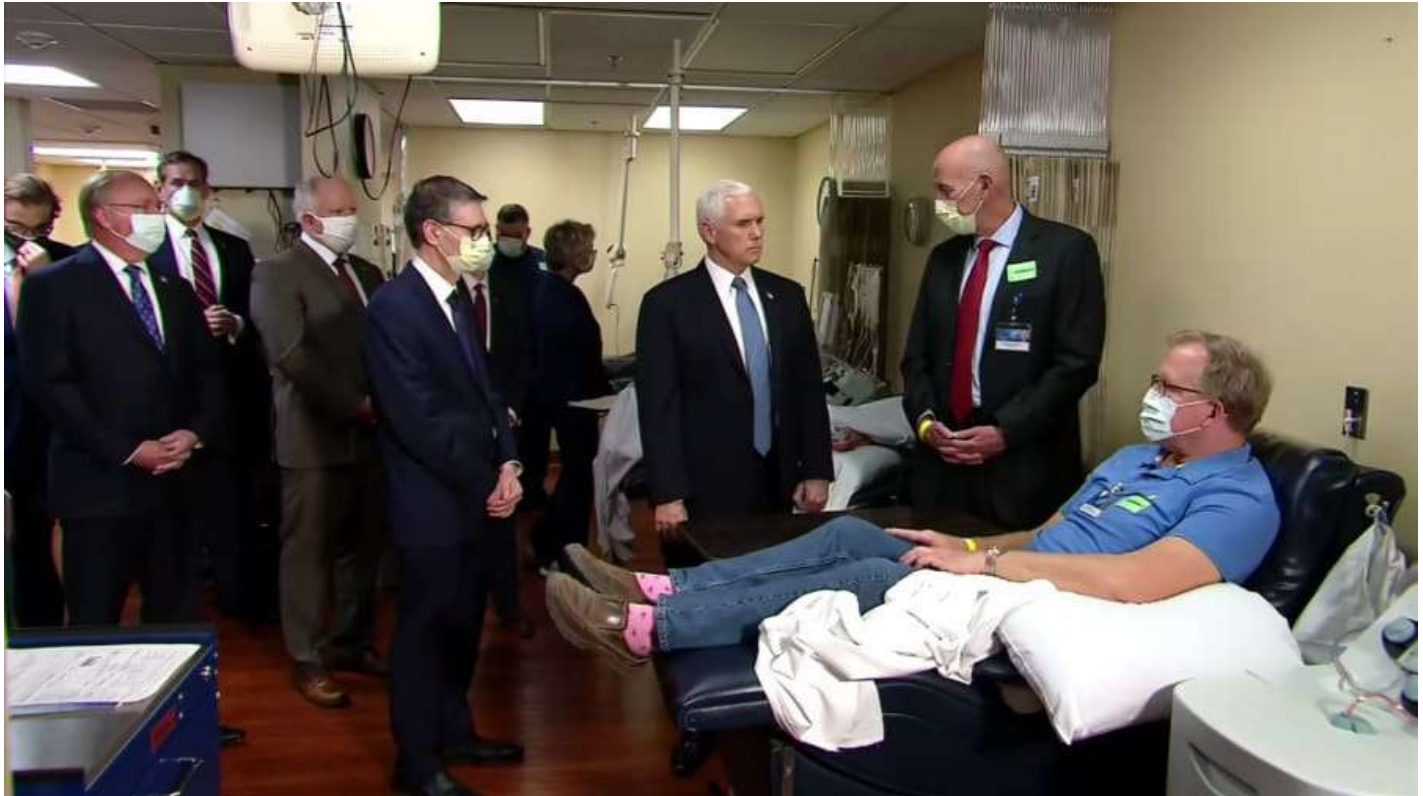
President Donald Trump has said that he will not wear a mask, even as more than 1 million Americans have contracted the virus that causes Covid-19.



VP Mike Pence visits Mayo Clinic, but does not wear face mask

Vice President [Mike Pence](#) on Tuesday toured the Mayo Clinic without wearing a mask, despite that renowned medical facility telling him that masks are required for visitors and everyone else there to slow [the spread of the coronavirus](#).

At one point during his visit to the Mayo Clinic, video of Pence showed him surrounded by 10 people, including a patient, who unlike him all were wearing masks.



In this pool image, Vice President Mike Pence Visits the Mayo Clinic Rochester Facilities, April 28, 2020. Pence is surrounded by 9 other people with masks including a patient.

Press Pool Video

Pence, who leads President [Donald Trump](#)'s coronavirus task force, later suggested to reporters that he did not need to wear a mask because he is tested regularly for the virus, and does not have it.

The Mayo Clinic, which is located in Rochester, Minnesota, [is requiring all patients, visitors and staff to wear a face covering or mask to slow the spread of Covid-19](#). The facility said that the mask requirement is part of its protocol “for ensuring your safety.”

The clinic said in a Twitter post that it had informed Pence of its policy mandating masks before he toured the facility.





About a half-hour after that tweet was posted, it was deleted by the Mayo Clinic.

People wearing masks greeted Pence at an airport, video shows.

The vice president was not wearing a mask when he got off his plane and headed to the Mayo Clinic, where he was greeted with applause and cheers by facility workers, most of whom were wearing masks.

While at the facility, Pence participated in a discussion with top doctors there, along with Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and U.S. Rep. Jim Hagedorn, a Republican whose district includes the city of Rochester.

Pence, who was accompanied on his visit by federal Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn, appeared to be the only official who participated in that discussion who did not wear a mask, according to a pool report. Hahn reportedly wore a mask during the tour.

On the same day that Pence visited the Mayo Clinic, the tally of Americans who have been diagnosed [with coronavirus infections topped 1 million](#). At least 57,266 Americans have died from Covid-19.

Pence was asked about why he did not wear a mask in the first question at a news conference at the facility after he completed the tour and discussion.

“As vice president of the United States, I’m tested for the coronavirus on a regular basis, and everyone who is around me is tested for the coronavirus,” Pence said.

“When the [federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] issued guidelines about wearing a mask it was their recognition that people that may have the coronavirus could prevent the possibility of conveying the virus to someone else by wearing a mask,” Pence said.

“And since I don’t have the coronavirus I thought it would be a good opportunity for me to be here to be able to speak to these researchers, these incredible health-care personnel and look them in the eye and say, ‘thank you,’” the vice president said.

Pence later was asked by another reporter how frequently he is tested, and whether he thought that wearing a mask might send a “positive signal to the American public.”

In response, Pence did not directly answer the question about the signal wearing a mask could send.



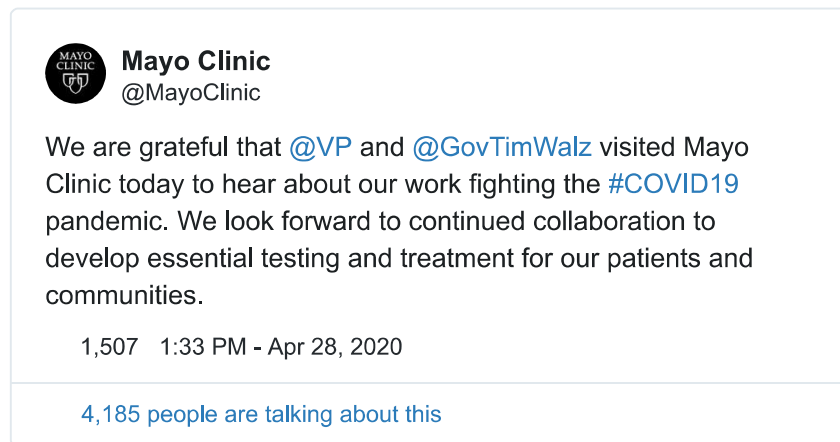
He added, “And I agree with the CDC guidance that wearing a mask doesn’t necessarily protect you from the coronavirus, but wearing a mask might prevent you from inadvertently conveying the virus to a loved one, family member or friend.”

“So we think they’re very useful in that respect, and we respect that altogether,” Pence said.

A Mayo Clinic spokesman, when asked for comment, said in email that, “Mayo shared the masking policy with the VP’s office.”

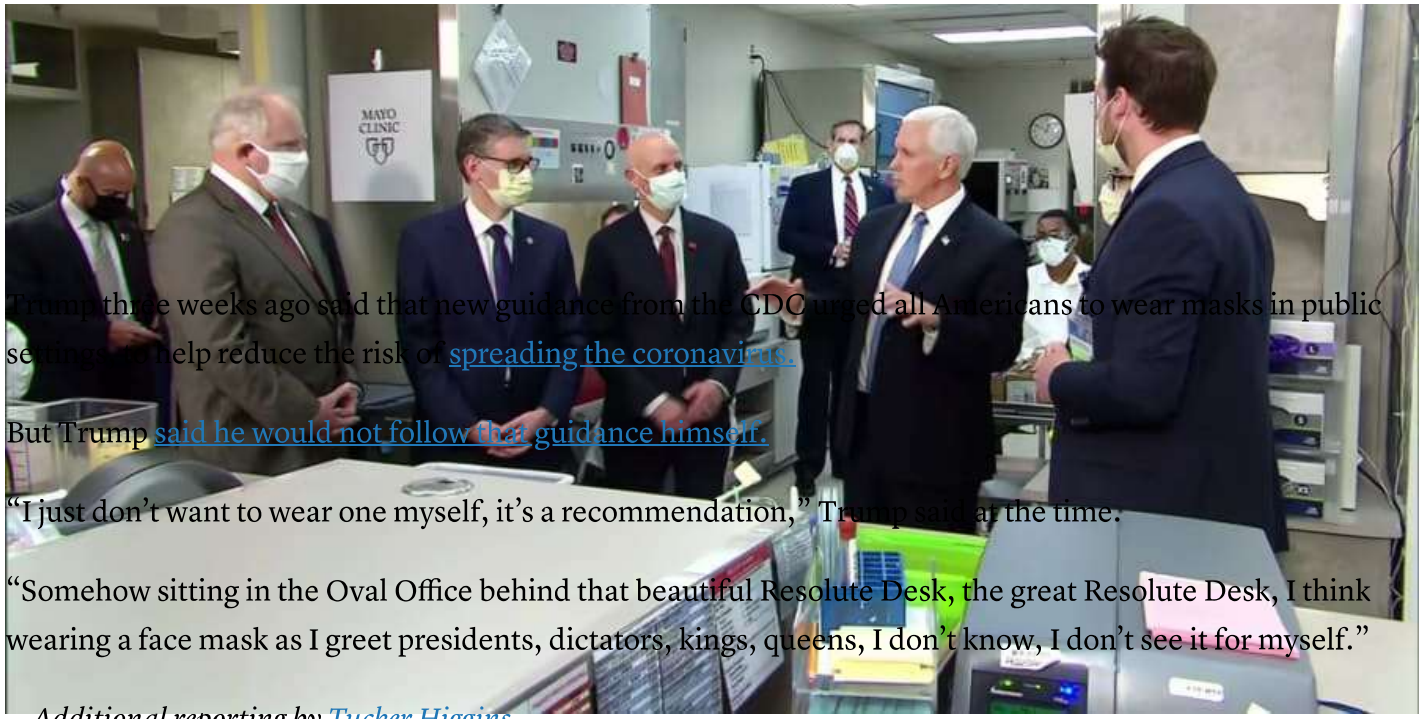
The spokesman did not respond to the question about why the facility deleted its tweet about Pence.

But the Mayo Clinic did post a new tweet saying it was “grateful” for Pence’s visit.



Pence’s aides [last week told The New York Times](#) that he did not wear a mask for the same reasons he gave Tuesday.

But the newspaper noted that Pence could contract the virus between his tests, and that the tests are not always accurate.



Trump three weeks ago said that new guidance from the CDC urged all Americans to wear masks in public settings to help reduce the risk of [spreading the coronavirus](#).

But Trump [said he would not follow that guidance himself](#).

“I just don’t want to wear one myself, it’s a recommendation,” Trump said at the time.

“Somehow sitting in the Oval Office behind that beautiful Resolute Desk, the great Resolute Desk, I think wearing a face mask as I greet presidents, dictators, kings, queens, I don’t know, I don’t see it for myself.”

-- Additional reporting by [Tucker Higgins](#).

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