

## Recitation E

### Why Wear a Mask?

When walking through the streets of Japan, a foreigner might think that many people are on their way to the hospital or terribly afraid of catching the latest plague. Why do men, women, and children wear medical masks? Are they scared of disease or is there some other reason?

In reality, Japanese people are trying to protect others as much as themselves. Japan is a small country with a large population, so colds and the flu spread very quickly. Germs are spread every time a person coughs or sneezes. Also, Japanese people almost never take days off from work due to sickness. Masks keep germs away from the healthy members of the office and school. It is very rude in Japan to inconvenience others, and it is very inconvenient to be as sick as a dog and unable to perform at work.

Some people are allergic to pollen, so they wear masks to prevent hay fever. Others wear them to protect themselves from sickness. Parents might put masks on their healthy children for this reason. They want to keep their children healthy.

Cleanliness is very important in Japan. From toilets to city streets, Japanese people want things to be clean. By wearing masks, we feel we can stay as clean on the inside as we hopefully appear on the outside. Plus, there are many cute styles of masks that can be worn for fashion as well as health.

Do medical masks really do the trick? Can they protect people from hay fever or from catching or giving colds? Or is it just a crazy fashion accessory that we use to make ourselves feel safer? Japan is one of the healthiest countries in the world. Maybe we do have the right idea!

(291 words)