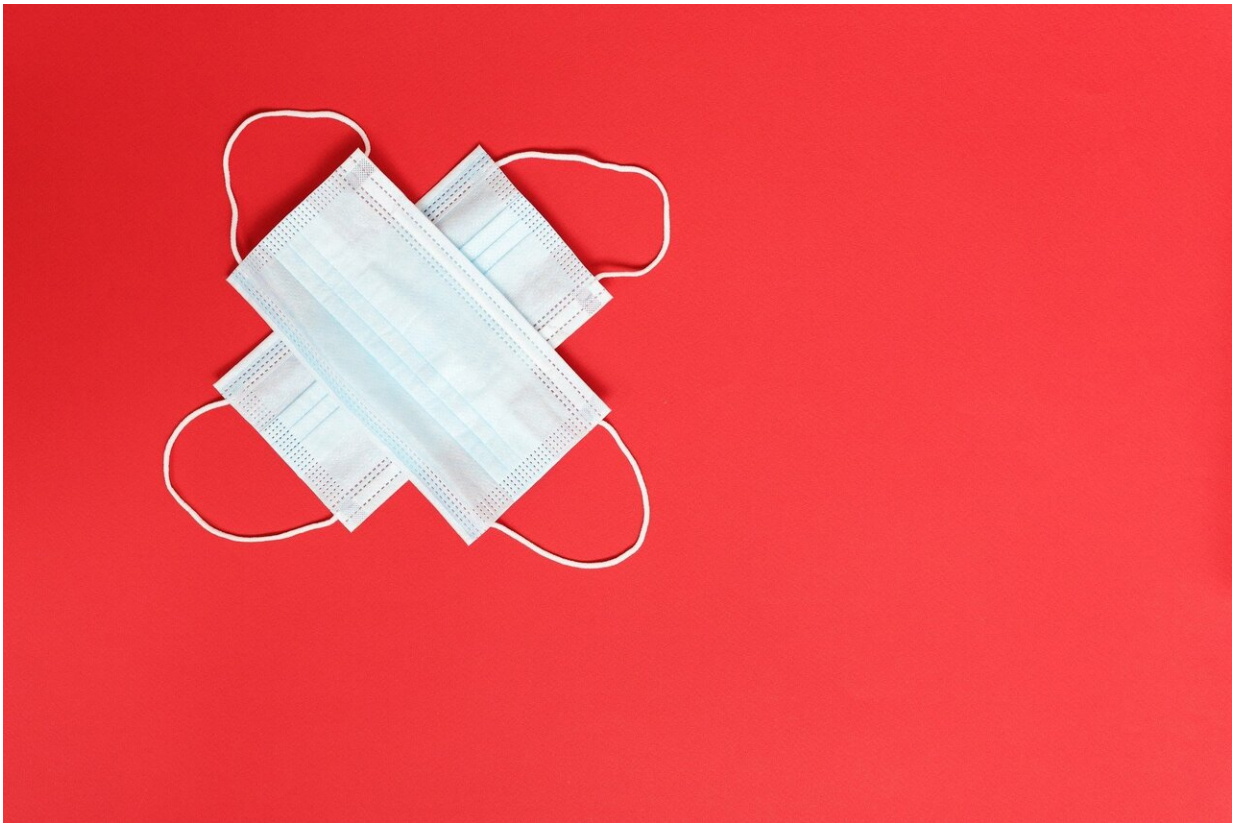


# Robot reminds Japan shoppers to wear masks

November 19 2020

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Asking someone to put on a mask is a touchy subject, so one shop in Japan has enlisted a robot to make sure its customers wear them during the pandemic.

"I'm sorry to bother you, but please wear a mask," says the small humanoid machine after wheeling up to a bare-faced shopper, in a demonstration video released by its developers.

"Thank you for understanding," it says when the customer obliges, bowing its rounded white head towards them in thanks.

The robot nicknamed "Robovie" has been deployed at a sports store in the city of Osaka in an experiment by Kyoto-based research institute ATR, which built the electronic clerk.

Its camera and laser scanner can detect when people are not wearing a mask, or standing too close together in the queue—in which case it asks them to move apart.

As well as enforcing social distancing, Robovie can direct customers to the part of the store they want to go to, according to ATR.

Japan has had a comparatively small coronavirus outbreak overall, although cases are rising with a record 2,201 infections recorded nationwide on Wednesday.

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