



# Health Officer Guidance on Face Coverings for General Public in All Age Groups

**The CDC has released guidance that COVID-19 can be spread during an asymptomatic period for 48 hours before the infected person feels sick.**

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

New information on the spread of COVID-19 now suggests that the widespread use of face coverings may help to protect our community from asymptomatic transmission of the disease.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Face-Coverings-Guidance.aspx>

Because of this, the Sonoma County Health Officer recommends that everyone who leaves their home for an essential activity wears a face covering to the extent possible, such as a fabric mask, scarf, bandana, or similar garment, while outside of their home. Additionally, everyone should continue to remain home except for essential activities and use social and physical distancing of 6 feet when outside of their homes.

## Protect your Community

Ordinary face coverings have not been proven to protect the wearer. When worn by someone with COVID-19, however, they may reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others. Since not everyone with COVID-19 knows that they are sick, wearing a face covering helps make sure you are not unknowingly affecting others. If worn by everyone when outside the home doing essential activities, this can help slow the overall spread of the virus and keep our community safer.

Anyone who knows that they have COVID-19, has been exposed to the virus, or who is experiencing symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath), should remain home and follow all isolation and quarantine directives from the County Health Officer and their medical provider. This guidance can be found on the CDC COVID-19 website “steps when sick.”

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

## Protect your Medical Providers

Use the best face covering that you can, but save purchasing new surgical masks and protective equipment for the professionals. Our doctors, PAs, NPs, nurses, paramedics, and other healthcare providers are bravely working through this emergency to protect the rest of us. To do so, however, they need personal protective equipment, and supplies are limited. Surgical masks, unexpired N95 masks, and other essential protective equipment is not recommended for everyday use at this time, unless you already have a supply at home for personal use.

## Protect your Self

Please follow all guidance on the use of face coverings and continue to use social and physical distancing. Face coverings are only one small part of the overall effort to slow the spread of COVID-19. Everyone should continue to stay home, except for essential activities, and take every precaution when going out, including frequent hand washing, social and physical distancing of six feet, and other appropriate measures. Please read and follow the guidance on the cleaning, fitting, and use of face coverings.

The Health Officer will continue to closely follow any changes in this topic on a daily basis, and may update this guidance in response to any future state and federal public health authorities' recommendations.

## Face Covering Usage:

### General Public Participating in Essential Activities while Following Required Social Distancing:

The Health Officer endorses the use of homemade cloth face coverings for members of our community when leaving their homes to engage in essential activities among the public.

- A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth, such as a bandana, a scarf, neck gaiter, or a homemade cover. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower-face. Homemade face coverings can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand, or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, T-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.
- Patterns for home-made/sewn face coverings can be found on the internet, for example:  
<https://santacruz.ideafablabs.com/masks/>

When used, cloth face coverings or homemade masks should be:

- Worn only by one person.
- Fitted carefully to prevent frequent adjustment. Practice strict hand washing before and after touching and adjusting the face covering or mask.
- Washed frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily;
  - If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing during the day, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face.
- Discarded if it no longer covers the nose and mouth, if it is stretched out or damaged and cannot stay on the face or has holes/tears in the fabric.

The public should continue to use physical and social distancing at any time that they leave home for an essential activity.