

Humboldt County COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions: Face Covering



On April 3, 2020, Health Officer Dr. Teresa Frankovich recommended members of the public use face coverings when leaving their homes on essential business to help limit the spread of COVID-19. This document provides guidance related to the use of face coverings.

1. What is a face covering?

A face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth, such as a bandana, a scarf, neck gaiter, or a homemade cover.

2. How do I use a face covering?

A face covering should cover the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower-face.

Make sure that you are the only person using your face covering and that it is fitted to be sitting comfortably so you will not need to adjust it often. Make sure you are washing your hands before and after touching your face covering or mask. These coverings should be washed at least daily and ideally after every use. Remember to wash your hands each time you handle the mask for any reason. If your face covering becomes stretched out of shape, is not covering your nose and mouth well or develops holes or tears, repair or discard it.

3. What material do I use to create a cloth face covering?

Homemade face coverings can be made from 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 are available on-line if you are able to make face coverings at home.

4. Should I have the same masks healthcare workers use?

The answer is no. Healthcare workers and first responders are essential to helping us all when we get sick and there has been a national shortage of the masks these workers need to protect themselves when they are dealing with ill individuals. We all benefit from a healthy and strong healthcare workforce during this COVID-19 pandemic and these individuals must be a priority for higher-level masks. 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.

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5. Why should we use face coverings?

At this time, we do not have evidence that face covering will prevent the person wearing it from getting infected, but it may help to reduce the spread of the virus from people who do not yet know they have the infection. Because symptoms may be mild and not everyone will even realize they are sick, they may unintentionally infect other people. Wearing a face covering will help reduce the chance that you are spreading the infection to others. If everyone in our community wears a mask, it can help to keep us all safer.

Please remember, this is only helpful if done correctly and used together with social distancing measures such as staying at home except for essential services and maintaining six feet or more distance between yourself and others when outside your home.

6. What if I am sick?

If you are sick with symptoms such as fever, cough, congestion, sore throat or have been diagnosed with a COVID-19 infection, you should be isolating at home and not out in public at all except to obtain medical care. If you need to go in for medical care, please wear a facial covering.

Guidance on what to do if you are ill may be found at:

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

7. How can I protect myself and my family?

Facial coverings are one tool in our toolbox, and they are only effective if used along with social distancing measures like staying six feet or more apart and staying home except for essential activities. Other important safety measures still include washing your hands frequently; using sanitizer when washing is not available; cleaning commonly used surfaces often; covering coughs and sneezes and staying home when ill. Please read and follow the guidance on the cleaning, fitting, and use of face coverings.

8. How will I know if this recommendation changes?

Public Health will continue to closely follow any changes in this topic daily and may update this guidance in response to any future state and federal public health authorities' recommendations.