



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION ON FACIAL COVERINGS

Santa Cruz County public health officials are sharing statewide guidance for the general public to cover their nose and mouth with cloth when leaving home for essential travel such as doctor appointments, grocery shopping or pharmacy visits.

This new public health information is found in guidance published by the [California Department of Public Health](#).

The face coverings do not have to be hospital grade but need to cover the nose and mouth. For example, bandanas, fabric masks and neck gaiters are acceptable. Fabric covers and bandanas can be washed and used again.

Health officials do not recommend that the public use medical masks (N-95 or surgical masks), which are in limited supply and must be preserved for our health care workers and first responders.

Up until now, local officials have not recommended the large-scale use of face coverings, but circumstances have changed.

“New evidence shows us that people with no symptoms or mild symptoms may have coronavirus and not know it. Wearing face coverings may help to protect others from exposure,” says Health Officer Dr. Gail Newel. “But face coverings are not a substitute for the social distancing requirements, including frequent handwashing, sheltering in place, staying home if you are ill and keeping six feet apart.”

Covering the nose and mouth with cloth also may be beneficial as a reminder to keep physical distancing. Health officials continue to stress that staying home, frequent hand washing and physical distancing are the best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.



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Acceptable face coverings can be made of a variety of cloth materials, be factory-made or hand-sewn, or can be improvised using bandanas, scarves, t-shirts, sweatshirts or towels.

Face coverings should be washed frequently with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. Ideally, wash your face covering after each use, and have a dedicated laundry bag or bin.

Make sure the covering is comfortable – you don't want to have to keep adjusting the mask, which means touching your face. Always wash your hands, or use hand sanitizer, before AND after touching your face or face coverings.