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Ventura County Public Health Press Release

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New public health comments about masks

Ventura, CA – Ventura County Public Health Officer changes position on face masks, no longer advising against wearing them in public. Instead, he supports those residents who wish to cover their nose and mouth when leaving home for essential travel to doctor appointments, grocery shopping or pharmacy visits. The face coverings should not be hospital grade at this time because there is a shortage and our health professionals need them. Masks should be homemade and cover the nose and mouth. There are numerous sites online which demonstrate or give patterns for how to make fabric masks. The Camarillo Sewing Brigade provides video instruction at the following [link](#). Additional instruction at the following [link](#). Fabric masks can be washed and used again.

For decades, Public Health officials nationwide and locally have said that wearing a mask for protection against the flu is unnecessary for the general public. Now, Ventura County Public Health Officer Doctor Robert Levin says circumstances have changed. “There is growing evidence that people can have COVID-19 without any symptoms and that they can pass it to others at this stage. Many people wear masks thinking it will protect them from a virus, and in certain cases it may. That may also be true for COVID-19 especially if accompanied by good hand hygiene and social distancing, but now there may be a better reason to wear a mask; it will decrease the chance of you spreading it to someone else if you have the infection asymptotically.”

This is particularly important if decreasing spread means not infecting a senior or someone with other chronic conditions. “In light of building evidence, I support those who wish to wear a mask in public. I don’t think everyone must do so, but I look upon those who do as making a responsible decision. I never thought I’d say that.” It is imperative though, that the use of masks by members of the public not contribute to the shortage of personal protective equipment needed by first responders like health care workers. If someone chooses to wear a mask in public, it should be home made, at least until there is no more shortage. “I’m not ready to wear a mask yet but I will respect those who do. It’s going to be hard for me to not start wearing one,” said Doctor Levin. “Covering your face doesn’t change the orders everyone must abide by to stay home as much as possible and maintain social distancing, but it’s an extra layer of protection that I think is reasonable to add.”

The rationale for covering one’s face comes from the belief that transmission occurs primarily through droplets from an infected individual, which fabrics may filter. This not only helps to reduce the risk a well person can breathe those droplets in, but also protects others around someone with mild or no symptoms who may not yet realize they have the COVID-19 infection. Face coverings may be worn anytime a person is outside of their home, even in offices of essential businesses.

“We must work together to stop the spread and save lives in our County,” said Doctor Levin. “That means that flattening the curve may benefit from another layer of protection against the virus. Consider the additional step to cover your face.” Health officials continue to stress that frequent hand washing, social distancing and staying home are the best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Stay in your place, maintain your space and cover your face.