

Ventura County and the Governor's Guidance on Face Masks for COVID-19

On June 18, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom provided Guidance on the wearing of cloth face masks. It is important that we all do this to protect others and ourselves. I think this Guidance is reasonable and makes common sense. We know that one of the ways that COVID-19 is transmitted is through the air. Masks can trap droplets being emitted by an infected person. Maintaining 6 feet of distance between individuals allows for viral-laden droplets a person is producing to fall to the ground or disperse. It makes sense then that whenever we are indoors away from our home, we should try to maintain 6 feet of distance between ourselves and others as well as wear a mask. If we all do this, it will provide us double protection. Of course, there are exceptions to this general rule which can be found in the Guidance itself. https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Guidance-for-Face-Coverings_06-18-2020.pdf. As far as the outdoors, masks are only required to be worn when waiting in line to go into a store, a restaurant and for public transportation or when interacting with others and unable to maintain 6 feet of distance. There are also some people for whom wearing a mask is not required. This can be found at the above link.

We know that an effective mask will prevent someone who is infected from passing this virus to another. And we now know that cloth masks afford significant protection to those who are wearing them. Recent research has confirmed this. Medical masks (also known as procedure or surgical masks) are perhaps not as readily available but can often be found in groceries, pharmacies and on-line. They are even more effective at preventing the transmission of disease than cloth masks. I have been unable to promote their use until now. Previously, the use of medical masks has been discouraged to save them for health care workers. Now, the head of our County's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Director agree the stores of medical masks are adequate and the pipeline to secure them is stable. It is important to understand that neither the OES nor EMS can make medical masks available to the general public. Their supplies are needed for health care workers should we see a COVID-19 surge in our County. Keep in mind that medical masks are the pleated masks. Do not use N95 masks (respirators). Also, masks that have valves built into them do not prevent the wearer from making others sick.

Masks protect others from those who are unknowingly shedding virus. I am asking that you wear a mask when you are in public and are at risk of coming into close contact with others. Let's all protect one another.

Robert M. Levin, MD
Health Officer
Ventura County
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