

## HEALTH ADVISORY: FACE COVERINGS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC April 11, 2020

On April 3, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) provided a **Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission**, linked [here](#).

Face coverings serve to protect other individuals from people who are asymptomatic, presymptomatic or ill. While symptomatic individuals are the primary driver of novel coronavirus transmission, recent studies indicate that a significant portion of infected individuals lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.

In light of this new evidence, CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

Cloth face coverings are a complementary strategy to other COVID-19 mitigation efforts. *Face coverings are not a replacement for social distancing, frequent handwashing and self-isolation when sick.* Face coverings may reduce face-touching, a frequent mode of transmission.

Cloth face coverings [made at home from common materials](#) are an additional, voluntary public health measure. They must be changed or removed if they become damp, to prevent growth of bacteria and viruses. They should be removed carefully without handling the front, and washed after each day of use.

**The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators.** Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders while shortages continue.