

# The CDC and Hamilton County Public Health Recommend Wearing A Protective Cloth Face Covering When in Public

April 5, 2020

Social distancing has been an excellent public health intervention for slowing the spread of COVID-19 to residents in Hamilton County. However, there are times where it is necessary to travel outside of your home, such as going to the pharmacy, grocery store or post office. On these occasions, the CDC and Hamilton County Public Health are recommending that you wear a cloth face covering to protect yourself and others.

Over the last month we have had a chance to observe areas with high concentration of COVID-19 respond to the virus being present in their community. We know that COVID-19 is present in Hamilton County, we have expected this all along, and now our job is to prevent it from multiplying, keeping our numbers and rate of transmission low. Wearing a cloth face covering when in public is another prevention strategy that we can easily implement to maintain the health and safety of our community.

## **New Guidance From CDC**

"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. CDC also advises the use of simple cloth face coverings to slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others."

An individual with COVID-19 may only display mild symptoms, and can be asymptomatic for 1-14 days. Wearing a cloth mask does not necessarily protect you from contracting the virus, but rather acts as a protective barrier from you infecting others. Vulnerable individuals, such as those with complex medical comorbidities, immunocompromised are strongly encouraged to continue to self-isolate and stay home during this pandemic.

Medical grade protective equipment, such as surgical masks and N95's, should not be worn by the public. These supplies should be reserved for healthcare workers and first responders, as they are already in short supply, and are at high risk for exposure to COVID-19.

## **Cloth face coverings should:**

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Cover the mouth and nose
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Include multiple layers of fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

"Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance."

If the face cloth becomes moist or soiled, it is more likely to hold bacteria and viruses, so it is important to keep it clean and dry. Be careful when removing the cloth face covering to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth, and wash your hands after.

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Remember, with COVID-19 an individual can be infectious for 4 to 5 days, without showing symptoms. In addition to social distancing and handwashing, this is one additional strategy where Hamilton County residents can work together to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our communities.