



Guidance for the General Public for Face Masks

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From: Andrew Woodruff, Public Health Director

In the first few weeks of the outbreak, there have been many different messages from officials regarding the use of the face masks for the general public. Plumas County Public Health Agency (PCPHA) is following the changing guidelines and has researched the available information on the use of the face masks to help the public make an informed decision.

The United States Surgeon General, Jerome Adams, is urging the CDC to establish guidelines for the use of face masks by the general public. The rationale behind the Surgeon General's decision is that asymptomatic people can, in fact, transmit the virus. At this time PCPHA is considering recommending that the general public wear face masks in public. The recommendations will be updated as new CDC or statewide guidelines emerge.

A study published by Cambridge University Press, found that both homemade cloth masks and traditional surgical masks significantly reduced the amount of potentially infectious droplets expelled by the **wearer**, though surgical masks were **three times** better for preventing transmission.

What does it mean:

- Cloth masks are **less effective** than medical masks, but their use, even if imperfect, is better than nothing at helping limit the spread of the virus.
- Using a mask does **NOT** mean that it is okay to relax social distancing and hand washing measures. Social distancing and stay at home orders remain in place and are critical to slowing disease spread.
- Homemade masks that are re-used have the potential to hold onto viruses and bacteria. If you are using a homemade cloth face mask, frequently wash it with hot water and soap, let completely dry, and iron before each use to get rid of infectious droplets.
- Do not use a face mask with unwashed or un-sanitized hands. Be aware that it is very easy to accidentally touch your face if you are adjusting your mask.
- Avoid close contact with people who appear unwell and who have fever and cough, even though you are wearing a face mask.
- It is very important to wash your hands frequently with soap and water to reduce the spread of the virus from your hands to your face.

For additional information, please visit Plumas County website: www.plumascounty.us or call 530-283-6400 or send e-mail to COVID19@countyofplumas.com