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Riverside County
NEWS RELEASE

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New public health recommendation to cover the face

Riverside County health officials are recommending residents cover their nose and mouth when leaving home for essential travel to doctor appointments, grocery shopping or pharmacy visits.

The face coverings do not have to be hospital grade but need to cover the nose and mouth. For example, bandanas, fabric masks and neck gaiters are acceptable. Fabric covers and bandanas can be washed and used again.

Up until now, local officials have not recommended the large-scale use of face coverings, but circumstances have changed.

“When the situation changes, the rulebook changes,” said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County public health officer. “We’re seeing our numbers increasing even sooner than we predicted and that means our strategy must change too. 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 we need 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 can easily 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 symptoms who may not yet realize they have the illness. Face covering should be worn anytime a person is outside of their home, even in offices of essential businesses.

"The numbers don't lie and we know that coronavirus is spreading and growing. However, these numbers are actual people and protecting the lives of people is all of our responsibility," said Board Chair V. Manuel Perez, Fourth District Supervisor. "That means that flattening the curve requires another layer of aggressive protection against the virus. Please take the additional steps 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," said Bruce Barton, director of the Riverside County Emergency Management Department.

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