



Use of Homemade Masks

Previous recommendation. At the beginning of this pandemic, the strong message to the public from the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization was not to wear masks unless you were already infected and needed to interact with others. The assumption was that people didn't spread the disease without symptoms, and that droplet spread occurred with coughing and sneezing. Also, there was a shortage of masks for healthcare workers.

New evidence about transmission. We recently learned that a significant portion of individuals with coronavirus 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.

New CDC recommendation. Given this new evidence, the CDC changed its recommendation. The CDC now 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.

Local recommendation. We have community-based transmission in Columbia County. The use of a cloth face-coverings is one more thing you can do to protect others when you cannot maintain a distance of 6 feet between others in a public setting. The use of cloth masks fashioned from household items or made at home from common materials at low cost is an additional, voluntary public health measure that may help us slow the spread of coronavirus.

It is important to remember the most effective strategies to prevent infection include the physical distancing measures in the Governor's Executive Orders, along with basic hand hygiene and cough etiquette. Don't assume that wearing a mask takes the place of any of those healthy behaviors. Please continue to:

- Avoid all social and recreational activities in which you cannot maintain a distance of 6 feet between others;

- Maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others during any necessary trips to grocery stores, pharmacies, or healthcare entities;
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue and discard it immediately; or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve rather than into your hands;
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth, or face;
- Clean your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and water, or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if handwashing is not possible; and
- If sick, isolate yourself and stay away from work, family, and friends until 72 hours after both fever and cough have resolved, without the use of fever-reducing medication.

Resources. For more information:

- [Oregon Guidance on Use of Homemade Masks or Face Coverings by the Public to Prevent Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [CDC: Recommendation Regarding Use of Cloth Face Coverings](#)
- [CDC: Instructions on Use of Cloth Face Coverings](#)
- [Multnomah County: Face coverings, masks and COVID-19: what you should know](#)

Non-medical masks do not replace Stay Home, Save Lives



Medical masks should be reserved for health care providers who are on the front lines working with patients most likely to have COVID-19. We have had shortages of those masks – and it's critically important that our health care workers have the equipment they need to do their jobs.



Non-medical mask use (e.g., homemade fabric masks) does not replace the need to follow guidance to stay home and limit our contact with others. It does not replace frequent handwashing, avoiding touching the face, staying 6ft away from others and people who are ill. These are the most important steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 illness.

For more information visit
healthoregon.org/coronavirus or call 211

