



## INYO COUNTY HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES PUBLIC HEALTH BRIEF

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### **Guidance for the General Public and Essential Businesses Regarding Cloth Face Coverings**

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The Inyo County Health Officer strongly encourages members of the public to use a clean face covering anytime they will be in contact with other people who are not household members in public or private spaces. Furthermore, businesses are strongly encouraged to provide all of their employees whose duties require contact with other employees and/or the public with a cloth face covering to wear while performing duties that involve contact with others.

#### **What is a cloth face covering?**

A cloth face covering is a material that covers the nose and mouth. It can be secured to the head with ties or straps or simply wrapped around the lower face. It can be made of a variety of materials, such as cotton, silk, or linen. A cloth face covering may be factory-made or sewn by hand or can be improvised from household cloth items. Tightly woven cloth will provide the best barrier.

#### **Use of Face Coverings is a Preventative Measure**

Recent information has indicated that covering your nose and mouth can slow the spread of COVID-19 because:

- Individuals can be contagious before the onset of symptoms. You may be contagious and do not know it. If you have covered your nose and mouth, it can limit the spread of COVID-19.
- We touch our face less when our face is covered. Touching your face after touching something contaminated with COVID-19 increases your chances of getting sick with COVID-19.

#### **Face Covering Options\***

Reusable face covering options for the general public include:

- Bandana
- Neck gaiter
- Homemade face covering
- Tightly woven fabric, such as cotton t-shirts and some types of towels

\* It's important to remember that medical-grade masks, such as N95 masks and surgical masks, must be reserved for healthcare professionals, first responders, and essential service providers

in high-risk settings and should not be purchased for personal use at this time. However, if you already have masks on hand, you may choose to use those or donate to a local health care facility.

### **Caring for a Cloth Face Covering**

It's a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally after each use, or at least daily. Have a bag or bin to store cloth face coverings until they can be laundered with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face.

Discard cloth face coverings that:

- No longer cover the nose and mouth
- Have stretched out or damaged ties or straps
- Cannot stay on the face
- Have holes or tears in the fabric

### **Use of Cloth Face Coverings does not Replace Other Required Prevention Strategies**

Our best community and individual defense against COVID-19 is to wash our hands frequently, avoid touching our eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands, avoid being around sick people and practicing physical distancing, especially by staying at home. Face coverings are not a replacement for these evidence-based strategies for slowing the spread of disease; they are an additional tool that can protect others from possible exposure to respiratory droplets that may come from our mouth when we talk, sneeze or cough.