

For Immediate Release

April 17, 2020

Combined with sheltering in place, social distancing, and hygiene practices, face coverings help slow transmission of COVID-19

Santa Clara County, CA – The County of Santa Clara's Public Health Department has issued expanded guidance, strongly urging all individuals to wear face coverings when out of their homes to perform essential activities. The detailed [guidance](#) builds on the recommendations issued by the Public Health Department on April 2, 2020. All individuals are strongly urged to cover their nose and mouth with a face covering, such as a bandana, scarf, towel, or other piece of cloth or fabric, when leaving home. Face coverings are critical for essential activities such as doctor appointments, grocery shopping, pharmacy visits, and riding on public transit, among others.

"We are strongly urging everyone in our community to wear face coverings," said Santa Clara County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody. "Staying home, minimizing even essential activities, and reducing contact with others is still the most important tool. But, when we do have to go out into the public, face covering is a critical tool to reduce asymptomatic transmission."

Face coverings should not be medical masks or other similar products but include any type of breathable material that will cover nose and mouth. Medical masks, such as N-95 and surgical masks, are strongly discouraged for general use. Due to the global demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), there is a severe shortage of PPE across the state. Santa Clara County Public Health asks residents to refrain from purchasing PPE for their own use and to utilize homemade face coverings instead.

Jurisdictions around the Bay Area are unified in the recognition that face coverings are a very important tool in breaking the chains of transmission. Some jurisdictions may use a legal Health Officer Order while others may use guidance or recommendations to achieve the same goals. Violating a Health Officer order is a crime, and local law enforcement is charged with enforcement of those orders. The Public Health Department is mindful that enforcement resources are limited. Our community has been active in following past guidance provided by the Health Officer and the Public Health Department and we anticipate significant voluntary compliance with this recommendation.

Visit the County of Santa Clara COVID-19 [website](#) for frequent updates.

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