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## Recommendation for the Use of Cloth Face Coverings

The CDC continues to study the spread and effects of COVID-19 across the United States. It is now known that a significant portion of individuals with COVID-19 lack symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and individuals who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can transmit the virus to others. This means that the virus can be spread between people interacting in close proximity—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not exhibiting symptoms.

The [CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings](#) in public settings where other physical distancing measures are difficult to maintain. **It is important to remember that maintaining the 6-foot physical distancing remains critical in slowing the spread of COVID-19. The use of face coverings does not replace previous physical distancing recommendations.**

Surgical masks or N-95 respirators are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance. These critical supplies are not recommended for use by the general public.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

Cloth face coverings should:

- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- Be secured with ties or ear loops
- Include at least two layers of woven fabric, not knit fabric
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape
- [Be made at home](#) from common materials such as an old t-shirt, scarf, bandana or hand towel

Avoid using face coverings that are not cotton or woven fabric as they are not recommended to provide protection.

Usage and care of cloth face coverings:

- Individuals should be careful not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their face covering
- Wash hands immediately after removing
- Routinely wash in a washing machine after each use

Tips to follow whenever you need to leave your home:

- If you are sick, stay home.
- Bring a cloth face covering with you whenever you leave the house in case you encounter a place where physical distancing is difficult to maintain (i.e. grocery stores, pharmacies, crowded outdoor areas).
- Maintain 6 feet of physical distance between you and others when you are out.
- Do not shake hands.
- Avoid touching your face, nose and eyes.
- Avoid touching high-touch surfaces. Use a tissue or your sleeve if you have to touch those surfaces.
- Sneeze or cough into your elbow.
- Wash your hands regularly, if sinks and soap are unavailable use provided hand sanitizer or bring your own (use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol) – especially after touching anything.
- Always wash your hands FIRST THING when you return home from being away for any reason.

If you would like to sew masks to donate for El Paso County first responders, please follow the guidance below:

- Make sure to use woven fabric. Fabric can be cotton, quilting cotton, cotton blend, or other light to medium weight woven material.
- Please use fabric patterns with solid colors or professional-looking patterns, nothing too “fun” since those wearing the donated masks will be using them while in uniform.
- Please use this sewing pattern for any masks being sewn for first responders: [Directions for Making Face Masks](#)