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News Release

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Contact: Amy Reynolds, (360) 688-3189

Department of Health highlights importance of face coverings, shares additional information

OLYMPIA – As counties across Washington state continue their progress on phased reopening, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) urges Washington residents to continue to do their part to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

“COVID-19 continues to be a very real threat,” said Secretary of Health John Wiesman. “Consistently wearing an appropriate cloth face covering in public is a simple and important way you can protect others.”

COVID-19 is spread through respiratory droplets people expel when they cough, sneeze or speak. Data show that people may spread COVID-19 even when they don’t have symptoms or feel sick. The risk of spreading disease is especially high in situations where a physical distance of six feet cannot be maintained.

“During a pandemic, no single action will stop the spread of the virus,” said State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. “In addition to consistently using cloth face coverings when they leave home, people must continue to wash their hands often with soap and water, stay home if they feel sick, and stay six feet away from others whenever possible.”

Cloth face coverings worn by the public when not at work do not need to be complicated or expensive. Use a breathable, washable fabric that comfortably and adequately covers your mouth and nose. Save medical masks and respirators for healthcare workers and others in high-risk settings.

As part of Gov. Inslee's "Safe Start" plan, starting June 8, all employees are required to wear a cloth face covering, mask, or respirator depending on their type of work. There are some exceptions, including when working alone in certain settings, when a job has no in-person interaction, and for people with a medical condition or disability that makes wearing a face covering inappropriate. Businesses are encouraged to require customers to wear cloth face coverings, in order to protect employees from exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace.

The coronavirus.wa.gov website hosts resources and information about [cloth face coverings for families and the public](#). Guidance for employers and employees about [which face covering or mask is appropriate](#) in which situations, and a [press release on this topic](#), are available on the Labor & Industries website.

DOH has established a call center to answer questions about COVID-19 from the public. Call 1-800-525-0127 and press # or text 211211.

The [DOH website](#) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. [Find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#). Sign up for the DOH blog, [Public Health Connection](#).

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