



PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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A PHAB-ACCREDITED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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PCDOH Supports Order on Cloth Face Coverings:
My Face Covering Protects You; Your Face Covering Protects Me

BREWSTER, NY— The one constant with COVID-19 seems to be the rapidly changing evolution of information and science. Experts continue to research and learn more about the novel coronavirus. Recent studies have now confirmed that individuals who are ill but have no symptoms can still spread the virus to others and yesterday the NYS Governor issued an executive order requiring face coverings for everyone in public where separation from others is difficult.

“The new evidence that this virus can be transmitted between people in close proximity before exhibiting symptoms is an important discovery and why we now support the face covering requirement for residents when they must go out in public for essential items,” said Putnam County Health Commissioner, Michael J. Nesheiwat, MD. “Our terminology is also shifting to include not just social distancing, but physical distancing as well. Our current practice of social distancing includes creating a physical space of at least six feet between people to avoid spreading illness. This physical distancing remains vital to protecting the health of our community now and will continue to play a big part when we are able to slowly shift back towards normal.”

Last week the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as well as the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) announced support for cloth face coverings. People should wear face coverings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, such as in grocery stores and pharmacies, especially in areas of significant community transmission.

Dr. Nesheiwat continues, “It is important to emphasize that wearing a cloth face covering is not a replacement for responsible distancing. Maintaining six feet distance at minimum when in public even with a face covering, and staying home unless it is for an essential task or job, continues to be the most important thing we can do to reduce the spread of this virus.”

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell encourages residents to endure and remain resilient. “Our efforts are paying off—everyone is helping by working remotely and appropriately distancing. We must not let up. If we can renew our efforts and add the responsible use of face coverings, we will be in that much better a position. I praise and thank all our residents for these labors. Let’s continue this success.”

There is some confusion about whether wearing a non-medical mask can actually protect the wearer. “The fact is this. Wearing a face covering is actually for the protection of those

around you,” clarifies Dr. Nesheiwat. “Safely covering your nose and mouth can prevent respiratory droplets from landing on other people or surfaces.”

Simply put, as the trending social media motto goes: “My face covering protects you. Your face covering protects me.” If residents plan to wear a face covering to help slow the spread, the Putnam County Department of Health (PCDOH) has some sensible advice. Cloth face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, be secured with ties or ear loops, and include multiple layers of fabric. It is important that the coverings allow for breathing without restriction. They should be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape. Here are some additional guidelines from the PCDOH:

1. A face covering is any well-secured paper or cloth, like a bandana or scarf, that covers your mouth and nose.
2. A homemade face covering may slow the spread of the virus by helping to prevent the wearer, who may have the virus and not know it, from spreading it to others.
3. Practice the six-feet-of-separation rule at minimum, even with a face covering.
4. N95 and surgical masks should still be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders.
5. For some, a face covering may have a hidden benefit—to help reduce the number of times they touch their face or rub their eyes or nose. For others, wearing a face covering may CAUSE them to touch their face. Face coverings are not recommended for certain people, such as children under 2 or those that are unable to place and to remove the mask PROPERLY by themselves. There are other situations where a face covering may not be advised. For a complete list visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

The mission of the Putnam County Department of Health, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB), is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services provided directly and through collaboration include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit online at www.putnamcountyny.com/health/coronavirus/; or visit our social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealthNY and Twitter @PutnamHealthNY.

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