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California Public Health Officials Release Guidance on Use of Cloth Face Coverings

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*Social distancing and hand washing are still best actions
Californians can take to fight COVID-19*

SACRAMENTO – California’s public health officials today released guidance on the use of cloth face coverings to protect against COVID-19 for Californians who must leave their homes to conduct essential activities. The guidance does not require people to wear face coverings – and is not a substitute for the state’s current guidance regarding social distancing and hand washing. The state also does not recommend Californians use N-95 or surgical masks, which are needed for our health care workers and first responders who will be there for when our lives are at risk.

“Face coverings are not a substitute for physical distancing or frequent hand washing, which we know are amongst the most effective ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19,” said Dr. Sonia Angell, Director of the California Department of Public Health and State Health Officer. “Wearing a cloth face covering could provide some additional benefit by acting as a reminder for other people to keep their distance, and

it could help reduce the spread of infectious particles from those who could be infected but don't have symptoms.”

“Face coverings could provide some additional protection against COVID-19, but Californians should not have a false sense of security if they choose to wear them. Make sure you're also staying 6 feet away from other people if you have to leave your home to get groceries or prescriptions,” said California Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly.

The new guidance reminds Californians that the best defense against COVID-19 continues to be:

- Staying at home and physical distancing
- Washing hands frequently
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoiding being around sick people

The use of cloth face coverings could reduce the transmission of COVID-19 by individuals who do not have symptoms and may reinforce physical distancing. Public health officials also caution that face coverings may increase risk if users reduce their use of strong defenses such as physical distancing and frequent hand washing.

For more information, please see the [Face Coverings Guidance](#).