



**Missoula City-County Health Department**

**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

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MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Missoula City-County Board of Health Adopts Cloth Face Covering Recommendation**

To protect the health of essential workers and members of the community, the Missoula City-County Board of Health adopted a recommendation today that all members of the public and employees and volunteers serving the public wear a cloth face covering over their nose and mouth when in public and unable to social distance.

The recommendation does not replace the need for social distancing, but rather provides additional protection to members of our community from presymptomatic spread. The recommendation applies to members of the public when doing essential shopping as well as to employees or volunteers who serve people in stores, pharmacies, and other such settings. The recommendation would not apply to those who cannot wear cloth face coverings if contraindicated for their health or cannot wear them properly due to their age or ability.

The Board hopes that the community embraces the recommendation so that an order is not needed. "The goal is to normalize face coverings to protect others in our community, including those essential workers who are at risk," said Cindy Farr, Incident Commander with the Missoula City-County Health Department's COVID-19 response. "It's about being a good neighbor."

The health department reminds the community that they can fashion cloth face coverings out items easily found at home, such as scarves, Buffs, and bandanas. Face coverings do not need to be sewn or specifically made for this purpose. Cloth face coverings should not be confused for surgical or N95 masks, which are needed for health care workers and first responders.

"The important part is that people wear them and wear them properly," said Farr. The cloth must cover the mouth and nose. It's also important not to touch the covering or take it on and off in the store. Put it on, don't touch it, and then take it off without contacting the front of it."

Information on how to make, wear, and clean cloth face coverings are available on the health department's COVID-19 page: <http://missoula.co/cvirus>.

In addition to the Board's move today, the COVID-19 response team encourages businesses to explore additional measures for customer and employee safety. While each organization is a little different, making uniform recommendations difficult, entities should consider the following:

- Daily employee wellness checks, including sending employees home with fever or coughing.

- Flexible employee sick policies that allow staff to stay home when ill.
- Providing access to handwashing facilities and encouraging staff to use them.
- Providing hand sanitizer, if possible.
- Providing dividers between customers and staff, such as cashiers.
- Cleaning and sanitizing shopping carts, baskets, and grocery belts.
- Providing reminders to shoppers about social distancing by marking six-foot increments at check stands, posting signage, or providing employee prompts.
- Limiting customers if social distancing measures cannot be maintained.

The health department also asks the public to help out essential workers by limiting visits to stores and only doing necessary shopping, rather than using shopping trips as something to do. They also encourage sending one adult to stores when possible to decrease the number of people in stores.

“These are difficult times, and we all need to do our part to make this happen. Let’s protect our essential workers and our community,” said Farr.