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DC **MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR**

<u>**Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19):**</u>
<u>**Masks and Cloth Face Coverings Guidance for the General Public**</u>

Face masks are a powerful tool for preventing the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19. Masks act as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and to other people when the person wearing the mask talks, coughs, sneezes, or raises their voice. This is called <u>source control</u>. Wearing masks is important to prevent asymptomatic spread of the virus that causes COVID-19.

- Face masks protect the wearer and protect other people.
- To be effective, masks must be worn correctly. Masks should be 2-3 layers of tightly woven fabric, cover the nose and mouth, and fit snugly against the sides of the face.
- A mask is not a substitute for physical distancing.
- Mask wearing is especially important for people who are not fully vaccinated or immunocompromised.

In settings where fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people may be present, the use of face masks will reduce the risk to individuals who are not fully vaccinated. Below are recommendations that the general public should follow for using cloth face coverings and facemasks to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Visit <u>coronavirus.dc.gov</u> for the latest COVID-19 information.

Who should Wear a Face Mask
<u>Fully Vaccinated Persons</u>

- A person is considered fully vaccinated 14 days after getting the last dose of a COVID-19 vaccine series (after the second dose of a two-dose series, or after one dose of a single-dose vaccine).
- **Fully vaccinated people do not need to wear masks in any setting, indoors or outdoors, except in the circumstances below.**
  - o Fully vaccinated people must still wear a mask:
    - At homeless shelters
    - At correctional facilities
    - In schools and childcare facilities
    - In healthcare settings
    - When required to per workplace or establishment policies
    - As required on public transportation traveling into, within, or out of the United States (on an airplane, train, bus, taxi, ride-share vehicle, or at a transportation hub such as an airport or train station)
- **Fully vaccinated people who are immunocompromised** (e.g. taking medications that suppress the immune system, history of organ transplant, autoimmune disorders, cancer, HIV) may not be fully protected and should discuss whether they need to wear a mask with their healthcare provider.
- Partially vaccinated people and anyone else who does not meet the definition of "fully vaccinated" should follow the same masking rules as for unvaccinated people.
- Take your shot! Find out more about the COVID-19 vaccine at <u>coronavirus.dc.gov/vaccine</u>.

<u>Unvaccinated or Partially Vaccinated Persons</u>
People who are unvaccinated continue to be at risk for becoming infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, and spreading it within their communities. Choosing not to wear a mask puts your own health, and those who cannot get vaccinated or may be immunocompromised, at risk. If you are unvaccinated, partially vaccinated, or immunocompromised and not fully protected by the vaccine, you are still recommended to take the precautions below.

- You should wear a cloth face covering or mask at any indoor or outdoor public setting, including but not limited to office buildings, gyms, apartment common areas, public transportation, or other establishments.
  - A face shield is not an acceptable alternative for wearing a mask.
- For persons who are not fully vaccinated, wearing a mask does not take away the need for social distancing. Everyone, regardless of vaccination status should continue other everyday precautions like staying at home when you are sick, and frequent hand hygiene.
- There are some activities that unvaccinated people can participate in without face masks at low risk to themselves, if engaging with fully vaccinated people outdoors. People who have not yet received the vaccine may do the following activities without face masks:
  - attending a small outdoor gathering with friends and/or family who are fully vaccinated;
  - visiting indoors with fully vaccinated people from one household.
- Please note that people who are at **high risk of severe disease from COVID-19[1] who are not fully vaccinated** should wear a face mask and maintain 6 feet of distance when interacting with people outside of their household.

Who should not Wear a Face Mask
- Children younger than age 2
- Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.
- Wearing a mask may not be possible in every situation. Adaptations and alterations can be considered in some situations, for example:
  - Small children may have difficulty wearing a mask properly for an extended period of time. In these circumstances, wearing a mask could be prioritized for times where social distancing is more difficult (e.g., when standing in line at school, carpool pickup and drop-off times).
  - Some people with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions or other sensory sensitivities may have difficulties wearing a mask and should consult with their healthcare provider for advice.

Types of face coverings
- **Cloth face coverings**: (such as homemade cloth masks, store-bought fabric masks, etc.) These can generally be washed and reused.
- **Clear masks**: (or cloth masks with a clear plastic panel) An alternative mask for people who interact with people who are deaf, students learning to read, students learning a new language, or people with disabilities.
- **Non-medical disposable masks**: These are masks look similar to medical grade masks but are not intended for medical use. They vary widely in quality and are unregulated and will not have the FDA seal of approval nor ASTM (American Society of Testing and Materials) protection level listed on the box.
- **Medical-grade disposable face masks** (for example medical, surgical, or procedure masks): These masks meet strict quality, filtration, and splash resistance requirements. Medical grade face masks are regulated by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and come in 3 different protection levels rated by the ASTM (American Society of Testing and Materials). Medical grade face masks will have the FDA seal of approval and ASTM protection level listed on the box.
- **Masks with exhalation valves** or vents should not be worn to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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[1] For a list of conditions which put people at risk for severe COVID-19 see Guidance for People with Chronic Conditions at coronavirus.dc.gov/healthguidance

- **Respirators** (for example N95 or K95): These are specialized medical supplies and should not be purchased or used by members of the general public. They should be reserved for healthcare workers and other professionals whose job tasks require their use and have been trained to wear them properly.
- **Any cloth face covering or face mask should be worn so that it covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly against the sides of your face to be the most effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19.**

How to Select a Face Mask

It is important to select a mask that meets certain standards to ensure it is being effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Not all masks that are available provide this protection, so it is important to review details about a mask before wearing.
- When selecting a cloth face covering, it is recommended to choose one that is made with:
    - tightly woven fabrics, such as cotton and cotton blends, that does not let light pass through when held up to a light source;
    - two or three fabric layers;
    - or inner filter pockets.
- Do not select a mask/cloth face covering that is made with:
    - material that is hard to breathe through such as leather
    - loosely woven for knit fabrics
    - one layer
    - exhalation valves.
- Scarves, ski masks and balaclavas are not substitutes for masks and if worn should be worn over your mask.
- If you wear glasses, find a mask that fits closely over your nose or one that has a nose wire to limit fogging.
- Wearing multiple masks may cause masks to not fit properly. It is more important to wear a mask that has the recommended number of layers and good fit.

How to Correctly Wear a Face Mask

- Before putting on a face mask, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Adjust your face mask so that it covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly against the sides of your face.
- Do not put your face mask around your neck or up on your forehead.
- Avoid touching the face mask while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Remove your face mask and replace with another if it becomes visibly dirty, wet, or difficult to breathe through.
- To remove the face mask:
    - Handle it by the string ties or ear loops only. Untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops and remove. Avoid touching the front of the mask.
    - Fold outside corners together (so the outside part is folded into itself).
    - Clean hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water immediately after removing the facemask.

How to Care for your Face Mask

- Cloth face coverings can be machine-washed with your regular laundry, using the warmest

appropriate water setting and drying it using the highest heat setting.

- Instructions for washing a cloth face covering by hand is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings
- Face masks cannot be washed. Discard a face mask when it becomes soiled (visibly dirty), damaged, or hard to breathe through.

The guidelines above will continue to be updated as the outbreak evolves. Please visit coronavirus.dc.gov for the most updated information.