

San Bernardino County recommends covering face in public to avoid spreading coronavirus



Fontana resident Ana Nucum wears a mask as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus as she shops inside Ontario Mills on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. San Bernardino County is now recommending that residents wear a covering to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus. (File photo by Watchara Phomicinda, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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San Bernardino County is recommending people [cover their faces](#) when they leave the house to avoid spreading the [novel coronavirus](#), public health officials said Thursday, April 2.

Face coverings should be worn when doing essential business, such as grocery shopping, going to a medical appointment or visiting a pharmacy, a news release stated.

Staying home, practicing social distancing and frequent handwashing are far more effective ways to combat the spread of COVID-19 and face coverings are not a substitute for continuing those practices, Acting County Public Health Officer Dr. Erin Gustafson, said in a statement.

“Surgical masks and N95 masks should not be used because they must be preserved for healthcare workers and emergency responders,” Gustafson said. “If you do use a

face covering, make sure to practice frequent hand washing before and after touching and adjusting the covering.”

The county made the recommendation after reviewing guidance released Wednesday, April 1, from the state Department of Public Health.

The recommendation follows one made by [Riverside County public health officials](#) Wednesday, April 1. Los Angeles and [Orange counties](#) have also advised residents to cover up after new research showed that asymptomatic people can spread the disease. It may also be spread through talking and breathing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has maintained that only people who are sick should wear masks when around others or before entering a medical office.

Face coverings may include coverings that secure to the ears or back of the head and encompass the mouth and nose. Homemade cloth ear loop covers, bandannas and handkerchiefs, and neck gaiters may be used to reduce the spread of the disease, particularly among asymptomatic people, public health officials say.

It’s recommended to wash cloth face coverings frequently after each use, at least daily. Face coverings should be placed in a bag until washing them in detergent with hot water and dried on a hot cycle, the county advises. Cloth face coverings should be discarded once they no longer cover the nose and mouth, have stretched out or have damaged ties and straps, cannot stay on the face or have holes or tears, they said.

“Covering your face may help reduce the chance that asymptomatic people spread COVID-19. This is not as effective as staying home and practicing social distancing,” Curt Hagman, Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, said in a statement. “We all need to do our part to flatten the curve and residents should use this as one more tool to stop the spread of this disease.”