



5/8/20-- Uinta County COVID-19 Update

WHY WEARING MASKS IN PUBLIC IS RECOMMENDED STILL

--It provides “Source Control,” which is all about keeping our stuff to ourselves.

Though the understanding about the Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is evolving as new research comes to light frequently, at this point it is common consensus that it is spread primarily when virus-containing droplets make it into a person’s mouth, nose or eyes.

These virus-containing droplets make it out of someone who has been infected through talking, laughing, coughing, sneezing, sighing, and breathing.

If you have a physical barrier in front of your mouth and nose, those droplets are less likely to escape. Your spit is less likely to get out, and, either onto someone else’s face, or onto surfaces, like checkout machines, tables, handrails, or anywhere else.

The public is asked to wear cloth masks because traditional surgical masks are in short supply. They don’t offer full protection (nor do surgical masks) but some protection is better than none, and the main source of protection is not necessarily for the wearer, but for others. The cloth barrier traps the wearer’s exhalations.

This is important because there is strong evidence now of pre-symptomatic transmission. One may feel fine, but could be transmitting the virus.

If more of us are wearing them, containing our own droplets, there will be less floating around, less on surfaces that we could potentially pick up. There is broad community benefit, but requires that many do it.

It is important to note that masks can’t replace all other approaches needed to fight the coronavirus, but when paired with all the other tactics, and when used correctly, masks offer an extra layer of protection. Continued mask use by the public is part of the recovery plan recommendations for many of the phases, until there are better therapeutic and vaccine options.

Here are some quick tips for using a mask correctly: try not to fidget with it once it is on, wash your hands before and after taking off a mask. Wash it frequently. If it becomes wet, change it out.

There has definitely been confusion with the recommendations, as world and national public health officials have shifted their guidance.

These changes are largely because of a few factors:

- Emerging and new research, especially with regards to transmission
- Concern over the shortage of PPE for healthcare providers (This is why the WHO continues to not recommend mask use for the public)
- Concern of an exaggerated sense of security—masks don’t make you invincible and don’t take the place of good hygiene and social distancing

While there is not a lot of research yet, specifically about public mask-wearing and COVID-19, the research that does exist, including some on the SARS virus supports more people wearing masks.

There have been some reports of mask use possibly leading to an increased chance of getting infected. These are associated with improper use—frequent touching with the hands, reuse without cleaning, as they can trap and hold virus-containing droplets that could be breathed in by the wearer. But several studies have concluded that they offer more protection than no mask at all.

The recommendation for healthcare workers is to utilize N95 respirators when possible and feasible in dealing with positive COVID-19 patients, but surgical masks are recommended if N95's are unavailable and lastly, cloth masks. Keeping our healthcare workers healthy and safe is important for all of our health and our healthcare capacity during the pandemic.

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