



Republic of Palau

Ministry of Health

P. O. Box 6027 Koror, Republic of Palau 96940

Phone: +680 488-2552 Fax: (680) 488-1211

email: administration@palahealth.org website: www.palahealth.org

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CONTACT: Ministry of Health Public Information Officer
Tel: +680-775-1138 Fax: +680-488-1211
Email: edolem.ikerdeu@palahealth.org

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Recommendation on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings/Masks, Especially in Areas of Significant (COVID-19) Community-Based Transmission

- Health authorities and researchers continue to study the spread and effects of the new coronavirus/COVID-19 across the world.
- Recent studies have found that a lot of people with coronavirus do not have symptoms (“asymptomatic”) and that even those who eventually develop symptoms (“pre-symptomatic”) can spread the virus to others before showing symptoms. This means that the virus can spread between people interacting in close proximity (less than 6 feet of each other)—for example, speaking, coughing, or sneezing—even if those people are not showing symptoms.
- In light of this new evidence, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends wearing cloth face coverings/masks in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and hospital waiting areas) especially in areas where COVID-19 is spreading in the community.
- Cloth face coverings/masks should –
 - Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
 - Be secured with ties or ear loops
 - Include multiple layers of fabric
 - Allow for breathing without restriction
 - Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape
- The cloth face coverings/masks recommended are not surgical masks or N-95 respirators. Those are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

Instructions on the use of cloth face coverings/masks:

- Do not place cloth face coverings/masks on children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

- Wash cloth face coverings/masks routinely, depending on frequency of use. A washing machine should suffice in properly washing a cloth face covering/mask.
- Before putting on cloth face covering/mask, wash your hands properly with soap and water, or hand sanitizer (70% alcohol). Cover mouth and nose with cloth face covering/mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and mask.
- Avoid touching the cloth face covering/mask while using it, and if you do, wash your hands properly with soap and water or hand sanitizer (70% alcohol).
- Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing your cloth face covering/mask and wash your hands immediately after removing.

Cloth face coverings/masks are not a substitute for social distancing. It is still very important to maintain 6-feet social distancing to slow the spread of the virus.

Visit CDC at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html> for more information on the use of cloth face coverings/masks. Ministry of Health will publish recommendations as new evidence regarding appropriate public health measures continue to develop.

For questions on COVID-19, call the MOH Hotline at 488-0555. If you have symptoms of COVID-19, call the BNH ER 488-2558 for instructions before you go to the Hospital. For emergencies, call 911.