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MEDIA RELEASE

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Date: 5/26/2020

From: Adams County Health Department

Reviewed and approved for release by: Alexander L. Brzezny, MD, MPH, FAAFP: Adams County Health Officer

For distribution to: Ritzville-Adams County Journal, Sun Tribune, Adams County PIO, Adams County Health Care Community, Schools, City of Ritzville, City of Othello, Town of Lind, Law Enforcement, Adams County – All Users

Subject: Adams County Health Department - Masking Directive; Effective 5/26/2020

Adams County moved into Phase 2 of Governor Inslee’s “Phased Approach to Reopening Washington” on Friday, May 22nd, 2020. As a result, Adams County residents and visitors are more likely to have interactions with non-household members. The frequency of person-to-person contacts will simply go up as more businesses are allowed to open and traffic in our communities increases again. This, in turn, will increase the risk of exposure to persons with COVID-19, since we continue to see this disease in Adams County. To respond to this and related concerns, **effective on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, Dr. Alexander Brzezny, Adams County Health Officer, issued a Face Covering Directive for Adams County (attached).**

If the number of people diagnosed with COVID-19 goes up because of increase in close contacts, it could compromise the County’s ability to stay “open” or move forward to the next phase of the re-opening plan. It could also endanger the county’s capacity to deliver essential governmental, public health and healthcare services to the public.

One of the key means of transmission of COVID-19 is by droplets that fly out of our mouths when we breathe, talk, cough, or sneeze. Often, COVID-19 spreads from people who do not know they have it. Recent studies show that nearly half of people diagnosed with COVID-19 are infected by people who do not have any symptoms. Face coverings or fabric and cloth masks are a tool we can use to stop our droplets from flying out. In that way we can all significantly reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community. Even a cotton mask can dramatically decrease the number of virus droplet particles coming from our mouths.

The effectiveness of face coverings in stopping COVID-19 is greatly impacted by the number of people who wear them. Some models have shown that if 80% of the people wear cloth masks that are even 60% effective at blocking transmission of the virus it could be enough to halt the spread of the disease in our communities.

Face coverings do not replace the need for frequent handwashing, surface cleaning or physical distancing of at least 6 feet. Used together, face coverings, physical distancing and surface cleaning with handwashing are even more effective in controlling the spread.

So, it is important for everyone without a medical reason not to wear a face covering to wear one. It's being a good citizen. Think of your neighbors or the strangers standing in line or walking past you on the sidewalk. You might not be concerned about your health, but they might be. The Directive is here to keep everyone safe, to show each other respect and to protect lives.

1. All individuals at indoor or confined public settings MUST WEAR FACE COVERINGS over their noses and mouths if they are likely to be in contact with another individual who does not share their household and staying away approximately six feet is not always possible. At this time, because it is still important to conserve medical-grade masks or N95 respirators for health care workers, unless a particular health reason requires it, individuals should use fabric coverings, such as cloth face masks, scarves and bandana coverings or other material as recommended by CDC.

2. Cloth face masks must be worn properly in order to avoid contaminating the hands or face of the user. Before putting on a mask and after removing a mask, an individual should clean their hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Masks should be changed and washed when soiled, moist and after use. Worn masks may be contaminated with infectious agents: while in use, avoid touching the mask.

3. This Directive applies to any indoor or confined public setting where a person will be in within six feet of another individual, who does not share the same household, and includes, but is not limited to the following sectors:

- a. Groceries, pharmacies, and other retail that sells food and beverage products, including but not limited to grocery stores, corner stores and convenience stores (including liquor stores that sell food), farmers' markets, food banks, farm and produce stands, supermarkets, "big box" stores that sell groceries and essentials and similar food retail establishments.
- b. Commercial retail stores that supply essential sectors, including convenience stores, pet supply stores, auto supplies and repair, hardware and home improvement, garden stores and indoor sales for nurseries that support food cultivation and production, office supply stores that support working-from-home, and home appliance retailers.
- c. Restaurants, food carry-out, quick-serve food operations—including food preparation, carry-out, and delivery food employees.
- d. Cannabis retail and dietary supplement retail stores; liquor, tobacco and vapor retail stores.
- e. Hair and nails salons and barbers.
- f. Real estate locations (including in-office, vehicle, house demonstrations, if necessary).
- g. Veterinary care and pet grooming services.
- h. In-home domestic services (nannies, housecleaning, etc.).
- i. Buses, light rail, and other forms of public transportation.
- j. Agricultural work and housing.
- k. Food and produce processing (frozen processing, produce sorting and packing, etc.).
- l. Any indoor manufacturing and indoor construction and remodeling.

4. The following individuals may be excluded from this Directive:

- a. Any child aged two years or less;
- b. Any child aged 12 years or less unless parents and caregivers supervise the use of face coverings by children to avoid misuse;
- c. Any individual who has a physical disability that prevents easily wearing or removing a face covering;
- d. Any individual who is deaf and uses facial and mouth movements as part of communication, or an individual who is communicating with a person who is deaf and uses facial and mouth movements as part of communication;
- e. Any individual who has been advised by a medical professional that wearing a face covering may pose a risk to that individual for health related reasons;
- f. Any individual who has trouble breathing or is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

5. Face covering use does not replace the need to practice physical distancing and adhering to phase II limitations of the Plan (staying away from ill people, staying home and avoiding all activities not permitted in phase II), frequent handwashing, regular cleaning of all surfaces, environmental barriers, avoiding touching of the face, etc.

6. Nothing in this Directive reduces or eliminates the requirements imposed by other directives and /or orders from the Local Health Officer, Governor, or other regulatory local, state, or federal agency including employer and business specific directives from the business owners or the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries, and any prior requirements to wear face masks or coverings in healthcare settings.

7. All commercial establishments in Adams County are directed to post signage advising individuals to wear face coverings on the premises. Establishments can download a sign example for this purpose at <https://www.co.adams.wa.us/government/covid-19.php>

8. At present time, violation of this Directive does not create grounds to detain, issue a citation, arrest, or prosecute individuals who do not comply with it. This Directive may and should be used to educate, encourage, and persuade individuals to wear face coverings.

I strongly urge all people in Adams County to voluntarily comply with this Directive without delay.

This Directive shall EXPIRE upon determination by the Adams County Health Officer that there is no longer a need for face coverings due to COVID-19.

Alexander L. Brzezny, MD, MPH, FAAFP
Adams County Health Officer

The full text of this DIRECTIVE is available on the Adams County Website at <https://www.co.adams.wa.us/government/covid-19.php>