

Local health officials recommend face masks in public settings

Face masks can help slow the spread of COVID-19

Glencoe, June 26, 2020 — Wearing non-medical grade face masks in public settings, such as grocery stores and gas stations, where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain is recommended to slow the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 spreads mainly from person to person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks. People can spread COVID-19 even when they don't have symptoms and do not know they are infected. A cloth face covering is an extra layer to prevent the droplets from traveling in the air to other people.

Minnesota Department of Health states that 10-50% of virus carriers are asymptomatic. Wearing masks helps control the virus and has been shown to lower COVID-19 spread. We should avoid enclosed spaces with groups of people, where the virus can linger in the air for long periods of time.

“We encourage people to wear face masks in all public settings such as stores, salons, churches as well as restaurants when not eating or drinking,” said Eric Weller, coordinator of South-Central Healthcare Coalition. “Wearing a mask is one of the best ways we can protect our vulnerable neighbors. Your mask protects others and their mask protects you.”

Face masks are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Minnesota Department of Public Health. To learn more about properly wearing face masks, visit the [CDC: How to Wear Cloth Face Coverings](#). Face masks should not be worn by children under 2 years of age.

Why the concern?

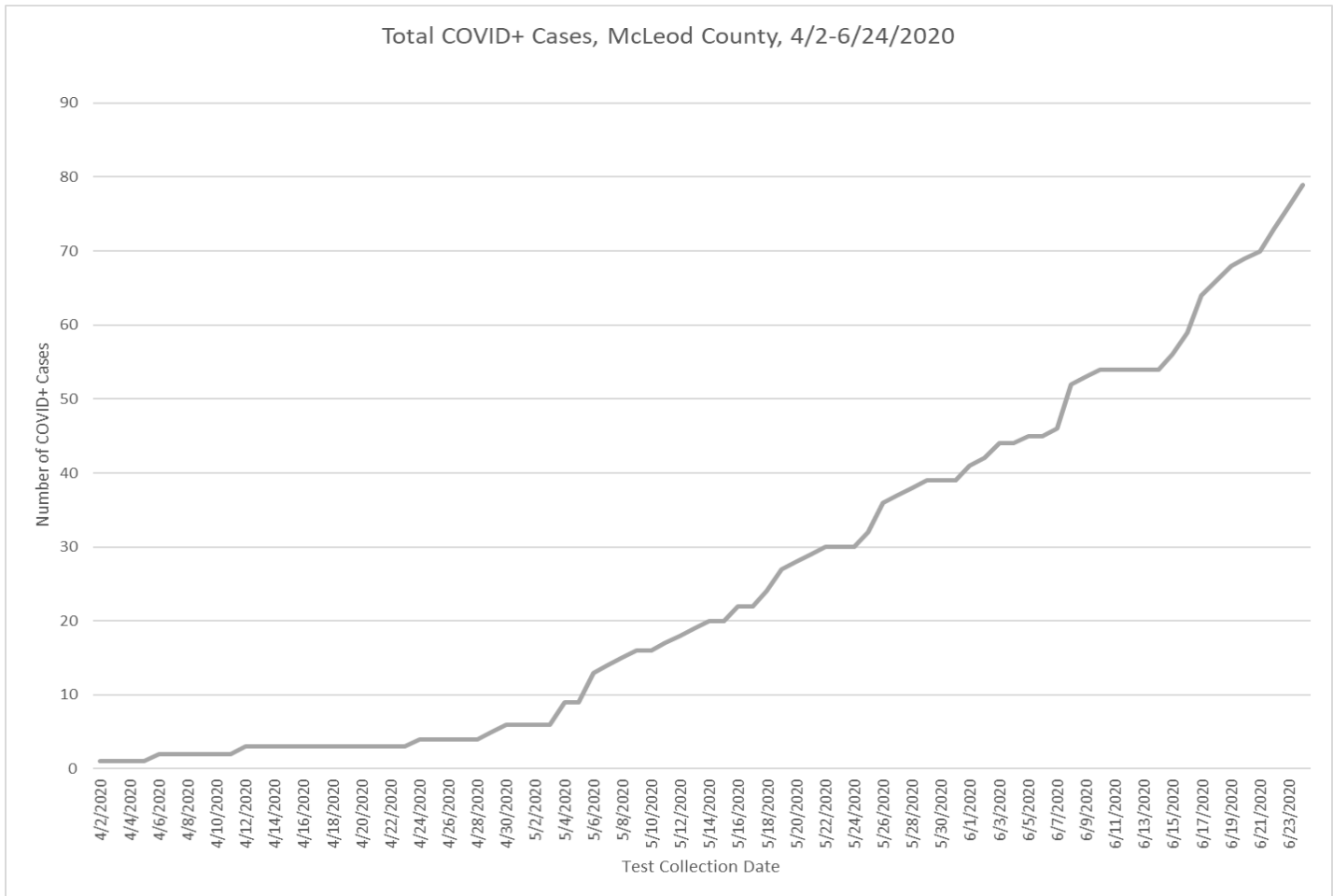
Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) president and Michael Fraser, chief executive officer of ASTHO are telling Americans that the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. COVID-19 remains a threat to many Americans, especially those with underlying chronic conditions.

Officials want to see an end to this virus as much as the residents of their states or territory, but the fact is the virus is still with us. Infections are increasing in many states across the country, hurting our most vulnerable citizens and threatening the health of our most essential workers, and potentially furthering the loss of lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of Americans.





While the number of new COVID-19 cases in Minnesota seems to be leveling off, infection rates are climbing rapidly in McLeod County as seen on the graph below. Wearing a mask during this COVID-19 pandemic won't necessarily protect you from catching the virus, but there is increasing evidence it protects your family and friends.



In addition to wearing a face mask, practice other everyday health habits. Practice social distancing of staying at least 6 feet away from others, stay home when you are sick, wash your hands often and use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

We understand its summertime and soon it will be 4th of July. Minnesotans need to take precautions during summertime activities like picnics, barbeques, vacations and cabin trips. Time spent outside provides many benefits. We encourage time outdoors as a good way to stay healthy, reduce stress, and enjoy time with friends and family. However, it is very important to follow the guidelines from the Minnesota Department of Health.

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Be cautious about contact with shared amenities and equipment like playground equipment, picnic tables, and benches. Assume such equipment has not been sanitized. Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer if you do come into contact with shared amenities. Do not host or attend outdoor gatherings of more than 25 people. This includes gatherings like outdoor cookouts or barbeques, because those types of gatherings could spread COVID-19. During travel, the following will help you minimize potential points of virus transmission:

- Travel as directly to your destination as possible and minimize stops along the way.
- Attempt to bring all needed supplies with you.
- If you do need to stop for gas or supplies, wear a manufactured or homemade cloth face covering.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after touching common surfaces (gas pumps, door handles, shared bathrooms, etc.).
- Do not travel if sick.

For more information on visit on McLeod County statistics you can visit the COVID-19 Dashboard at <https://mndps.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/f28f84968c1148129932c3bebb1d3a1a>. For information how COVID symptoms, health guidelines or proper mask wearing go to the Department of Health's site at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/index.html> and you can find more information on outdoor recreation guidelines on the Department of Natural Resources' site at https://staysafe.mn.gov/assets/outdoor-guidelines_tcm1152-435380.pdf

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