As we have learned more about COVID-19, the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends members of the general public wear a cloth face covering. The virus is thought to be spread mainly from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.

The Bottom Line
Surgical masks and N-95 should be reserved for use by healthcare workers due to already limited supplies. The use of masks must be coupled with frequent and proper hand washing and social distancing. Cloth face coverings ARE NOT a replacement for social-distancing.

Types of Masks
- N95 Respirators: Tight-fitting mask that filters out airborne particles as well as larger droplets. Reserved for healthcare settings.
- Surgical Masks: Loose-fitting mask that protects from larger droplets, splashes, saliva and respiratory secretions. Prioritized for healthcare settings.
- Homemade Masks/Face covers: Made from fabric or scarves and generally reusable.

When to Use a Mask/Cloth Face covering?
- Whenever you are out in public, such as when getting groceries, medication or medical care.
- When you are around people who don’t live in your household, especially when social distancing is difficult to maintain.
- If you are sick with COVID-19 or think you might have COVID-19 and need to be around other people or animals, wear a cloth face covering (including within your home).
- If you are caring for someone who has COVID-19 or someone who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms

How to Put on and Take Off a Mask
- Before use, wash your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Cover mouth and nose with mask. Ensure there are no gaps.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it; if you do, clean wash your hands.
- Replace the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp. DO NOT re-use single-use masks. Discard immediately in a closed bin and wash your hands.

How to Care for Non-Disposable Masks/Face Covers
- Cloth face coverings should be washed after each use and at least daily.
- Cloth face coverings can be washed with regular laundry using a laundry detergent, a disinfectant like bleach and the warmest appropriate water setting for the fabric that the cloth face covering is made from.
- You may also choose to hand wash the face cloth covering.
- Dry completely on high heat to kill pathogens.
- To air dry, lay flat and allow to completely dry. If possible, place the cloth face covering in direct sunlight.

Cloth Face Coverings should:
- Fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face and be secure under the chin.
- Completely cover the nose and mouth.
- Be secured with ties or ear loops.
- Include multiple layers of fabric.
- Allow you to breathe easily.
- Be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to its shape.