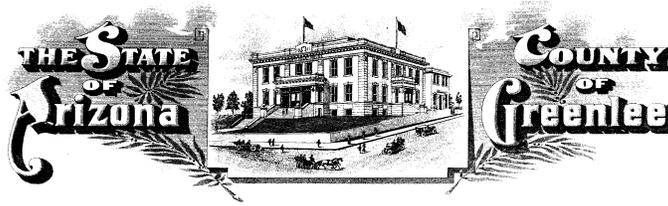


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Greenlee County Health Department
STEVE RUTHERFORD
DIRECTOR

Monday, March 30, 2020

The Greenlee County Health Department is encouraging our Residents to consider the use of masks when outside of the home and in the public. We are hoping that this encouragement will not cause panic or undue anxiety but will make our communities safer and slow any potential spread of COVID-19 as it moves through the United States. We are asking the Public to consider some things that we know about this virus and the spread of disease. We, as a community, also need to take current global shortages into account as we approach possible solutions.

1. The virus that causes COVID-19 can survive for days on environmental surfaces.
2. The virus is likely spread in the community by persons who are infected but have no symptoms.
3. Persons who are infected can spread the virus through droplets (small particles of spit) when they talk, cough, and sneeze. The spread of these droplets can be minimized by the use of a mask, thereby protecting the community.
4. Some studies have shown that the average person touches their own face sixteen (16) times per hour when awake. Wearing a mask can help the person remember to not touch their face until washing their hands.
5. Masks, even homemade masks, can lower the particle size of droplets that are spread, making the inoculum (number of virus particles spread) lower. A lower initial inoculum could prove to be important in overall better disease outcomes.
6. Countries who have instituted the use of masks by the public have seen a slower spread rate in their population.
7. The use of a non-medical mask protects the community more than it protects the person wearing the mask. Wearing a homemade or paper mask will not fully protect the wearer against aerosol particles, but it has been shown to protect the community as a whole.
8. Medical grade masks are currently in short supply.
9. Again, wearing a mask in public will not completely protect the wearer but affords more protection to the community as a whole.

With these things in mind, the Health Department is recommending that Residents consider the use of masks, even homemade breathable cloth masks. This is not a requirement, but a recommendation to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community. This recommendation is in addition to our recommendations for social distancing. Our community needs to continue being productive during this global outbreak. We need to do what we do best in Greenlee County, produce. The community needs

to protect those who cannot work from home, by minimizing community spread. We believe this measure will help.

We are not recommending any particular type of mask. We do recommend considering a few things when choosing a mask type or making one at home. With current global mask shortages, people may need to be creative in obtaining a mask, which could include making their own. Please refrain from attempting to obtain masks or equipment from our Health Care System or other essential business.

- Make sure the mask encloses the area around the nose and mouth
- Choose a material that is tightly woven, but is **breathable**, if making your own
- Double layered fabric is being used in other parts of the world for homebuilt masks
- Fabric, if homebuilt, should be washable and able to withstand bleach and the high heat of a clothes dryer
- **NEVER** place a mask on a small child prior to testing the mask and making sure that it is breathable for the child
- **NEVER** use a mask if it restricts your breathing
- Choose social distancing over mask use if possible
- Avoid touching the exterior of any mask
- **Frequent handwashing** is a critical part of reducing the spread of COVID-19

The Health Department is currently working to increase its' supply of protective equipment. We are working with our Health Care Providers and First Responders throughout the County to make sure our front-line workers have what they need. We are not currently able to provide masks or other protective equipment to the general public.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus>

<https://www.azdhs.gov>

<https://www.greenlee.az.gov>

Greenlee County Health Department at (928) 865-2601