

**Benton-Franklin Health District**  
www.bfhd.wa.gov

**Kennewick**  
7102 West Okanogan Place

**Pasco**  
412 West Clark Street

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Benton-Franklin Health District Website  
www.bfhd.wa.gov

Washington Department of Health  
www.doh.wa.gov

Centers for Disease Control  
www.cdc.gov

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June 4, 2020  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## HEALTH OFFICER DIRECTS RESIDENTS TO USE FACE COVERINGS

Benton-Franklin Health Officer Dr. Amy Person issued a Health Officer Directive today for the public to use face coverings to reduce the spread of COVID-19 illness. The directive will take effect on June 8, 2020.

The directive applies to all indoor public places in Benton and Franklin Counties, including grocery stores and other businesses, as well as outside settings where maintaining six feet of physical distancing is difficult. Individuals are strongly urged to wear face coverings over their nose and mouth.

“With greater freedom comes greater responsibility,” said Dr. Person. “Issuing this directive will help bolster our commitment to safely advancing to the next phase of the Safe Start Washington plan.”

Wearing a face covering can help prevent the spread of infection to others by blocking infectious droplets from spreading when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes, and speaks. People can be infected and contagious before or even without developing symptoms. Evidence suggests a significant number of infections may be transmitted in this way.

Because face masks such as N95 respirators continue to be reserved for health care workers, residents should use fabric face coverings such as cloth masks, scarves, or bandanas.

The Directive applies to both workers and patrons of groceries, pharmacies, big box stores, and other essential establishments, including pet supplies, auto repairs, and home improvement stores. Restaurants with carry-out and food delivery must comply as well. Face coverings do not need to be worn outside unless appropriate social distancing cannot be practiced, such as at farmers markets.

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Exceptions to the Health Directive include children, people with disabilities, deaf individuals who use facial movements as part of communications, and others. Health Officer Directives are based on individual compliance by the public; there is no penalty for not wearing a face covering. The public is also reminded to practice compassion and understanding for individuals who cannot use face coverings.

The Directive will remain in effect until it is no longer needed and rescinded by Dr. Person.

As of June 4, 2020, 1,554 Benton and Franklin County residents have tested positive for COVID-19 and 84 have died due to COVID-19 illness.

The full Health Officer Directive, posters, and visual materials are posted at <https://www.bfhd.wa.gov/cms/One.aspx?portalId=10766056&pageId=16781295>

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