



PRESS RELEASE

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Attention: All News Editors

Ministry issues recommendations for the wearing of Masks

KINGSTON, Jamaica. Monday, April 6, 2020: The Ministry of Health & Wellness wishes to advise persons to exercise caution in how they wear masks in the bid to prevent COVID-19. At the same time, members of the public must observe infection prevention measures, such as washing and sanitizing hands even while wearing the mask.

The Ministry recommends the use of masks by:

- Persons who are ill with coughing and sneezing;
- Persons who are quarantined or isolated at home with or without respiratory symptoms and household members who care for the person or are in the same house;
- Persons who have had COVID-19 and have been discharged from hospital should wear a mask for two weeks; and
- Elderly and persons with chronic illnesses, who are at high risk, if infected, of developing severe illness and complications of illness such as the. These persons must also avoid ill persons and minimize contact with the public.

Members of the public are at highest risk of exposure to droplets emitted by infected persons in crowded situations and where these situations cannot be avoided, wearing a mask will decrease the likelihood of exposure.

Additionally persons, who do not readily have access to running water, or where living conditions do not allow for physical distancing, should wear a mask in addition to observing the necessary infection prevention control measures.

According to the Chief Medical Officer of Jamaica, Dr. Jacqueline Bisasor McKenzie, *“Many persons are advocating for the routine wearing of masks by the general public. Yes, it can be useful. It does offer some protection especially where there are persons who are coughing and sneezing within your 3-6 feet personal space.”*

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“Wearing a mask continuously is uncomfortable and you must avoid touching and adjusting the mask as, if the mask is contaminated, you will contaminate your hands and infect yourselves and others, Dr. Bisasor McKenzie added.

The Ministry further advises that if you wear a mask, you should observe the following:

- As soon as there is contamination of the mask, it must be discarded or if reusable, it must be washed, as the risk of you contaminating yourself increases.
- If the mask is not worn properly it can interfere with your eyes. Do not rub or touch your eyes after touching the mask.
- Hand sanitize after touching the mask.
- Discard the mask if it becomes soiled or moist.
- Remove the mask by grasping the loops that are either at the back of your head or behind your ears and pulling forward and away from your face. Do not touch the front of the mask.

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