Tips for wearing a face mask by Marrison Worthington

In line with other states across the nation and CDC guidance, the Illinois stay-at-home May 1 order extension requires wearing a face covering in public places such as grocery stores and pharmacies or at work. Any individual who is over the age of two and medically able to tolerate a face-covering is required to cover their nose and mouth.

While many have already been wearing a mask, it's important to do it right. Dr. Kamo Sidhwa, infectious disease specialist at Advocate South Suburban Hospital suggests taking the following actions to ensure your safety:

- Masks should be washed daily with regular detergent or soap after initial use.
- It may need to be washed by hand or in the gentle cycle of the washing machine if made of delicate material. It may be also be worthwhile to have a few masks available while you are cleaning.
- If elastic is in the mask, it needs to be checked to make sure it has not lost its elasticity and remains secure and fitted when wearing.
- Once your mask is visibly soiled or damaged, you should discard it and start using a new one.
- Be careful when removing dirty masks to ensure you aren't touching your face until after you wash your hands.

Safe masking is an important step we can take in helping prevent the spread of COVID-19, but Dr. Sidhwa also reminds us that masks does not take the place of social distancing.

"The point of these coverings is to lessen the chance that a potentially asymptomatic infected individual may spread their infection to others," says Dr. Sidhwa. "Distancing is still the most important thing we can do to decrease overall spread."

Wishing you joy and good health,
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