

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Eau Claire County Partners Asking Public to Wear Cloth Face Coverings
“Mask up, Eau Claire County!”

Eau Claire WI, July 15, 2020, 12:15 PM – With the recent rise in COVID-19 cases in Eau Claire County, local partners representing business, education, healthcare, and government are jointly urging the Eau Claire community to wear a mask while in public. These same agencies have been collaborating for months on the local response to COVID-19 through testing, providing PPE, and long-term planning for local economic recovery.

“We’re so fortunate to have excellent partnership in this community across these different sectors,” said Lieske Giese, Eau Claire City-County Health Department Director. “We are all concerned about the recent rise in cases and hospitalizations locally and want our community to understand the importance of wearing masks in public.”



Representatives from each of the organizations below will be participating in a **joint virtual media briefing at 3:30 PM on Wednesday, July 15th**. The media briefing will include an update on recent cases, local metrics related to disease spread, healthcare capacity, and public health capacity, and statements from partner organizations about the importance of wearing face masks to slow the spread of COVID-19. The media briefing will be streamed live through the Eau Claire City-County Health Department Facebook page ([@eauclaيرهhealthdept](https://www.facebook.com/eauclaيرهhealthdept)).

The following organizations will be participating in the Wednesday media briefing and strongly support the use of masks in public settings:

Chippewa Valley COVID-19 Economic Recovery Taskforce	SHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s Hospitals
Chippewa Valley Technical College	Marshfield Clinic Health System
City of Altoona	Mayo Clinic Health System
City of Eau Claire	OakLeaf Clinics
Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce	OakLeaf Medical Network
Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation	OakLeaf Surgical Hospital
Eau Claire City-County Health Department	Prevea Health
Eau Claire County	UW–Eau Claire

Several partners shared the below statements regarding the importance of wearing masks:

“Wearing a mask and social distancing are the best things you can do to prevent the spread of the disease,” said Dr. Ken Johnson, Chief Medical Officer and Vice President of Operations at Prevea Health in Western Wisconsin, and emergency medicine physician at HSHS Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s hospitals. “Even if you are young and healthy, wear a mask to prevent spread to friends and family who may be at higher risk of severe illness.”

“Wearing a mask is a simple, yet effective and compassionate way to care for yourself as well as others around you. Let’s be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.” –Binu Philip, D.O., Family Medicine Physician, OakLeaf Clinics-Pine Grove Family Medicine

“Eau Claire County has been fortunate to have relatively limited COVID-19 positive cases, to this point,” explains Humayun Khan, M.D., Vice President of Medical Affairs for Marshfield Medical Center – Eau Claire. “We know what works and we’ve followed the guidelines of social distancing, wearing facemasks and frequent handwashing, and our community has benefited. It’s important that we continue to make responsible choices that not only protect us, but help keep our friends and neighbors who are at higher risk of COVID-19 as safe as we can. We are learning more and more every day about this virus, and we are far from being clear of danger. For the health and safety of everyone in our community, please follow the guidance of our public health officials.”

“CVTC is committed to providing quality education to support the workforce needs of the region. In addition to expanded safety precautions, CVTC has implemented the requirement for all individuals to wear masks while on campus. To maximize our ability to educate individuals for essential jobs, we must minimize risks that may jeopardize our ability to deliver the required hands-on components of these essential careers. I believe the wearing of masks is a simple step to allow us to continue to provide quality education which contributes to the quality of life we enjoy in our communities” –Bruce Barker, President, Chippewa Valley Technical College

“Oakleaf Surgical Hospital fully supports the recommendation for wearing masks. We have implemented universal masking at the hospital and encourage our staff to promote it community wide.” –Penny Svec, Chief Nursing Officer, OakLeaf Surgical Hospital

“The proper use of facemasks is proven to be an effective measure for combatting the spread of COVID-19. Preventive measures such as masking, good hand hygiene and social distancing are essential steps to stop the spread of the virus, protect our communities and our neighbors and restore our economy. Mayo Clinic requires masks for our staff, patients and visitors while on campus and we are asking our staff to lead by example when they are in the public because we know this is one of the best ways to protect one another from contracting the disease. We are a healthier community when we help and support one another and ensure that all are safe during these challenging times. We are proud to partner with organizations in the communities we serve and support efforts to increase the use of facemasks as an effective public health measure.” – Richard Helmers, M.D., regional vice president, Northwest Wisconsin Region, Mayo Clinic Health System.

You can stay up to date with the latest information on the COVID-19 website covid19eauclaire.org, Facebook ([@eauclairehealthdept](https://www.facebook.com/eauclairehealthdept)), or Twitter [@ehealthdept](https://twitter.com/ehealthdept). If you have questions, email us at ehealth@co.eau-claire.wi.us, or call the COVID-19 phone line at 715-831-7425.

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Promoting health and safety for all Eau Claire communities