



GEAUGA PUBLIC HEALTHSM
Promoting and Protecting Community Health

470 Center St., Building 8, Chardon, OH 44024-1071
440.279.1900 www.geaugacountyhealth.org

Thomas Quade, MA, MPH, CPH, FRSPH
Health Commissioner

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Press Release

For More Information, Contact:

Tom Quade, Health Commissioner

Phone: (440) 279-1900

Email: TQuade@GeaugaCountyHealth.org

Health Commissioner Calls for Masks in Public Places as the County Risk Level is Raised

Chardon, Ohio – Geauga County Health Commissioner, Tom Quade, is strongly encouraging Geauga County residents who are able to wear a face mask to do so whenever they are in the presence of others outside of their own households. This call for action is not a local public health order nor is it a state mandate in Geauga County.

The Geauga County Health Commissioner “strongly believes that it is far better for the public to understand the value of prevention and to make the decision on their own to protect one another than to rely on the government to step in and attempt to order common sense, mutual respect, and simple human compassion for other people with whom we share our space.” He does also recognize certain obligations. “When people make personal decisions which put the health and safety of the general public in jeopardy, we do have a responsibility to act. That is why health departments exist.” Our county risk level assessment as defined by the Ohio Department of Health has been elevated from level one (yellow) to level two (orange). The state’s level three risk assessment carries with it a state-mandated mask requirement.

Quade suggests that because our individual experiences are intertwined, we are all balancing our individual freedoms and our community’s wellbeing. “It is like minding our speed when driving in school zones. It is inconvenient when we are in a rush but we have a civil as well as legal obligation to protect the children. We don’t simply tell them to stay home if they’re afraid to cross the street when we’re driving through.”

Quade calls for sustained efforts to prevent the increases of cases and hospitalizations occurring outside our county. Geauga County businesses are also encouraged to consider requiring customers to wear masks, especially in and around Middlefield, where the recent community spread is higher. According to the June responses to the health department’s community input survey, observing low rates of mask use by patrons in retail and grocery stores, restaurants, and bars is among the leading reasons people are likely to do business elsewhere. Masks are good for the public’s health. They may also be good for business.

Health Commissioner Quade has also been working closely with school administrators throughout the county on return to school plans in an attempt to minimize the inherent increased risk of transmission. “One of the most effective things the community can do now to minimize the risk is to reduce the number of cases in the general population in advance of students and teachers returning to school. The progress we make is made together.”