

Universal Mask Guidelines

All employees, license independent practitioners (LIP), contract workers and volunteers entering the health care facility will be expected to wear procedural/surgical face mask in all public and clinical spaces and in any setting where other individuals may be encountered. The exception to this would include those health care professionals providing care for patients that require the use of an N95 respirator or PAPR. Only facility approved mask/respirators are to be utilized in clinical areas.

This universal mask approach will serve to:

1. Protects others if you are infected with COVID-19, including asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infection (a mask achieves source control and decreases the risk of spreading infection).
2. Protects you if you have close contact with a patient, co-worker or other individual with COVID-19, including asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic infection.

To be successful, this new approach will require:

- Strict adherence to extended use/reuse of masks
- Meticulous adherence to hand hygiene
- Proper mask use and hygiene including wearing the mask as directed to cover the mouth and nose
- Strict avoidance of manipulation/touching the mask to reduce the risk of contamination and self-inoculation

A new surgical/procedural face mask will be issued **at the start of each shift**. Masks will be used throughout the shift. **In the event that the mask becomes visibly soiled, contaminated, saturated or damaged, a new mask must be obtained.**

We ask all personnel to make every effort to help preserve the supply of PPE and reduce the need for replacement masks whenever possible. Infection Prevention guidelines should be followed on the use and re-use of procedure/surgical masks.

Cloth face coverings should not be worn in a clinical setting as a substitute for facility provided medical grade masks.

Respirators with an exhalation valve are not permitted, as they allow unfiltered exhaled breath to escape and are not a suitable product for source control.

COVID-19 transmission can occur through unprotected exposures to asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic co-workers including interactions in non-clinical areas and in breakrooms. Ensure physical distancing (individuals are 6 feet or greater apart) during breaks and meals, when masks are removed. Implement strategies to limit the number of individuals in breakrooms, such as staggering meal times or utilizing alternative locations for breaks/meals.

Masks are not required in private work spaces where physical distancing is observed and encountering other individuals is unlikely.

Skin sensitivity with masks

Employees who have experienced skin sensitivity, rashes or breakouts due to prolonged mask utilization should contact Employee Health if evaluation by a medical professional is needed.

- Take regular breaks from face masks. Remove the mask completely during this time. Take this opportunity to hydrate, have a snack or toilet. Ensure appropriate physical distancing anytime mask is removed.
- Using headbands or hats with buttons to hook masks to or other devices can help remove pressure from ears. However caution should be used when utilizing these devices because they can cause the mask to fit tighter on the face and nose and create pressure in other locations. These devices should never be used with N95 masks, nor anything placed under an N95 mask because this can alter the fit and reduce the effectiveness of the device.

Infection Prevention Guidance on facemask extended use and re-use

Extended use of facemasks

Extended use of facemasks is the practice of wearing the same facemask for repeated encounters, without removing the facemask between encounters.

- The facemask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- Take care not to touch the facemask. If the facemask is touched or adjusted immediately perform hand hygiene.

Donning and Doffing of mask

To Don (Put on) facemask

1. **Perform hand hygiene.**
2. Ensure the integrity of the mask and there are no holes, tears or soiling.

3. Determine which side of the mask is the top. The side of the mask that has a stiff bendable edge is the top and is meant to mold to the shape of your nose.
4. Determine which side of the mask is the front. The colored side of the mask is usually the front and should face away from you, while the white side touches your face.
5. Put on the face mask:
 - *Face Mask with ear loops*: Hold the mask by the ear loops. Place a loop around each ear.
 - *Face Mask with ties*: Bring the mask to your nose level and place the ties over the crown of your head and secure with a bow.
6. Mold or pinch the stiff edge to the shape of your nose.
7. If using a face mask with ties: Then take the bottom ties, one in each hand, and secure with a bow at the nape of your neck.
8. Pull the bottom of the mask over your mouth and chin.

To Doff (take off) facemask with intent to reuse

- 1. Perform hand hygiene**
2. Remove mask:
 - *Face mask with ear loops*: Remove mask by holding the ear loops. The front is contaminated, so remove slowly and carefully.
 - *Face mask with ties*: Remove mask by untying lower ties FIRST. Untie upper ties last. The front is contaminated, so remove slowly and carefully. Ensure ties do not fall into clean interior side of mask.
3. After removing facemask, visually inspect for contamination, distortion in shape/form. If soiled, torn, or saturated the mask should be discarded.
4. If the facemask is NOT visibly soiled, torn, or saturated, fold mask in half so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage. Store **in paper bag with employee name on it**.
- 5. Perform hand hygiene.**

Masks should never be worn around neck or pulled down below chin as this creates risk of self-contamination. Masks should not be pulled down or otherwise manipulated when answering phones/making phone calls.

A disposable facemask can be worn throughout your shift if not visibly soiled, torn or saturated. Do NOT touched while delivering patient care.

Reference:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, June 19). *Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html>