

Use of Barrier Masks

KEY RECOMMENDATION:

Because of the increasing probability (related to the community spread) a patient or healthcare worker could be exposed to a patient incubating COVID-19 in clinical settings, **the health system is recommending healthcare workers wear a barrier mask** while engaged in patient-care activities.

A disposable facemask can be worn for several hours if not wet, distorted or touched while delivering patient care.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Due to limited mask supply, the recommendation for routinely wearing masks is currently restricted to healthcare workers involved in direct patient care activities. Employees without direct patient care duties would have little to no benefit to routinely wearing a mask, but they are advised to keep physical distance of at least 6 feet from other employees.

All employees can lower the risk of respiratory virus transmission with the following measures:

- Stay home if you are ill
- Maintain social distancing from others (6 feet)
- Avoid touching your face
- Perform hand hygiene often
- Check your temperature twice daily
- Stay home if temperature is 100.0F or higher
- Symptomatic healthcare workers should NOT wear a mask and come to work. They should stay home until their symptoms have resolved.

Mask FAQs

What kind of mask should I wear?

Any hospital-provided mask type is suitable for this intervention since it does not need to filter the air that is breathed. In this application, the mask simply serves as a barrier to prevent droplets from reaching a healthcare worker's nose/mouth – or from being expelled from the healthcare worker's airway onto the patient's mucosa.

Who should wear a mask?

- Frontline healthcare workers who provide direct patient care in ambulatory and inpatient settings.

Can I wear the same mask into multiple exam rooms or patient rooms?

Yes, but only if patients are not under airborne or droplet precautions or demonstrating active respiratory symptoms such as a cough AND you do not remove the mask between patient interactions. Once in place, you should avoid touching the mask with your hands.

When should I discard the mask?

Any mask should be discarded when:

- You exit an isolation room (see information below).
- Mask is visibly soiled, torn or damaged.
- Mask becomes damp.
- Mask becomes contaminated (e.g., mask is inadvertently touched with a soiled hand or glove, or a patient sneezes directly onto it).

What about Isolation?

Isolation precautions take precedence over routine mask use.