

## Universal PPE Guidelines and FAQs

(as of March 21, 2022)

In alignment with the CDC, Nebraska Medicine is making modifications to the Universal PPE Guidelines to support the numbers of COVID-19 cases in the [community](#).

**Vaccination remains the most effective way to prevent transmission of disease and is the best way to prevent severe illness with risk of hospitalization and death.**

Guidance will be updated and/or expanded based on the level of community spread of COVID-19, the proportion of the population that is fully vaccinated, the rapidly evolving science on COVID-19 vaccines, the understanding of COVID-19 variants and employee health data related to COVID-19 exposure.

### Key Points Applicable for ALL Nebraska Medicine Sites:

- Regardless of vaccination status:
  - Masks will be required in all clinical settings.
  - Masks will be required whenever a colleague is indoors in the presence of a patient and/or visitor.
  - Masks must be doffed and discarded when leaving a droplet/contact precautions isolation room. A new mask must be donned by the colleague immediately after leaving this type of isolation.
    - *When masks are used for droplet precautions, the mask becomes contaminated during patient encounters via large droplet particle transmission. For colleague and patient safety, a new mask is required.*
  - Masks will be required by employees, patients and visitors in indoor **public** settings on a Nebraska Medicine campus.
    - This includes hallways, cafeterias, elevators, parking lots, waiting rooms and all clinical areas.
  - The exception to this would include those health care professionals wearing N95 respirators or powered air purifying respirators (PAPR) while providing care for presumed or known COVID-19 positive patients, those patients that are intubated and pediatric patients under two years of age.
  - Vented masks, neck gaiters, cloth masks and bandana style face coverings CANNOT be worn in the healthcare setting.
  - Eye protection will follow standard precautions.
    - Eye protection is a continued requirement for care of patients with or under investigation for COVID-19

- Eye protection is highly recommended for all patient interactions
  - Employees are to self-monitor for symptoms concerning COVID-19 infection at the beginning of every shift.
    - Detailed Guidelines for Healthcare Workers can be found [here](#).
- Colleagues that are not fully vaccinated:
  - Must continue to comply with masking and physical distancing recommendations in all public/private, clinical/non-clinical locations.
  - Should not have unmasked interactions with other personnel.
- All individuals who wish to wear a mask may continue to do so, even if fully vaccinated.

### Rationale to Universal PPE Guidelines

Knowledge regarding COVID-19 is rapidly expanding and allows for the opportunity to update PPE guidelines to incorporate the best evidence about issues like mask and respirator use and viral transmission.

In addition to mask use, existing policy [EC68](#), outlines that eye protection **must** be worn during all tasks where there is a potential of splash of blood and/or body fluids. The exception to this would include those health care professionals wearing goggles or face shield while providing care for presumed or known COVID-19 positive patients.

Employees are to self-monitor for symptoms concerning COVID-19 infection at the beginning of every shift. If you feel you are displaying symptoms related to the virus, we ask that you notify your manager and contact Employee Health.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 may include any of the following:

1. Fever ( $\geq 100.0$  F)
2. Cough
3. Shortness of Breath

Additional symptoms that are less common but have been present with COVID-19 include:

4. Sore Throat
5. Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea
6. Muscle Aches
7. Unexplained loss of sense of smell and/or taste

Successful reduction of the COVID-19 spread requires support from all colleagues as well as:

- 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 and
  - Strict avoidance of manipulation/touching the mask or eye protection to reduce the risk of contamination and self-inoculation

### **Employees in Inpatient Units, Ambulatory Clinic Spaces, and Procedural Areas**

All employees working in inpatient units, ambulatory clinic spaces, and procedural areas will be required to wear a Nebraska Medicine issued procedural/surgical face masks, at all times when in an indoor public space, clinical area and in the presence of patients/visitors. KN95 or N95 may be worn if desired. Masks will be used throughout the shift. In the event that the mask becomes visibly soiled, saturated or damaged, a new mask must be obtained. The exception to this is when a colleague leaves a droplet precautions setting. Masks must be doffed and discarded when leaving a droplet/contact precautions isolation room. A new mask must be donned by the colleague immediately after leaving this type of isolation

Vented masks, neck gaiters, cloth masks and bandana style face coverings CANNOT be worn in the healthcare setting.

All personnel are asked to be prudent in order to help preserve the supply of PPE and reduce the need for replacement masks whenever it is safe. Infection Prevention guidelines should be followed on the use and [re-use of procedure/surgical masks](#). Non-soiled face masks may be re-used upon return to work, if appropriate reuse and storage guidelines are observed.

**At the end of shift**, personnel are asked to maintain their use of a mask until they exit the building. Events have occurred where unmasked colleagues have been in elevators, walkways, and entrances in parking and transit structures with other unmasked colleagues without proper distancing, resulting in the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Safety glasses are eyewear which resemble glasses but have permanently attached side shields and conform to ANSI Standard Z87.1. Staff are welcome to purchase and wear their own eye protection, but it must conform to ANSI Standard Z87.1. There are clip on side shields that conform to these standards that can be worn with prescription eye wear.

### **Employees in Non-Clinical Settings and Office Spaces**

Personal masks must be worn upon crossing the threshold into the facility and remain in place until you reach your destination. Individuals working in non-clinical/non-public settings such as ECCP, are no longer required to wear a mask. Individuals who are at higher risk of severe disease, immunocompromised or who are more comfortable masking can continue to mask.

### **Patients and Visitors**

Nebraska Medicine will require patients and any visitors to wear a medical grade mask at all times while on a Nebraska Medicine campus regardless of vaccination status. Patients seeking emergency medical care should not be denied services for failure to adhere to mask compliance. Health care team members should consider need to provide alternate accommodations such as face shield and should proceed in utilization of enhanced PPE precautions in the emergency care of the patient. Patients and visitors may wear a medical grade mask from home (vented masks, neck gaiters, cloth masks and bandanas are not allowed). Personal non-vented KN95 or N-95 may be worn. Patients/Visitors will be provided with a medical grade mask if they do not have one available. The mask must be worn for their entire visit on campus. If they arrive wearing a cloth mask, a surgical/procedure mask will be

issued. The medical grade mask can replace the cloth mask or be placed on top of the cloth mask.

Visitors refusing to wear an approved mask for any reason will not be allowed entrance. Patients coming for an ambulatory appointment who refuse to wear a mask will only be allowed entrance if they have written documentation of a medical condition that limits their ability to wear a mask from their physician.

Inpatients will be provided a medical grade mask upon admission to an inpatient unit. Patients will be allowed to wear a medical grade mask, from home, so long as it is not visibly soiled, saturated or torn. Any personal mask, that is visibly soiled, saturated or torn, will be replaced with a Nebraska Medicine-issued mask.

All Intubated patients and patients under two years of age are excluded per these guidelines. Patients are encouraged to wear masks, as they are able, whenever others are in the room and are required if they exit the room. Admitted patients should be encouraged but never forced or coerced to wear a mask. Children over the age of two should wear a mask, if cooperative.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can I buy my own eye protection?**

Yes. You are more than welcome to buy eye protection, but it must conform to ANSI Standard Z87.1

### **How do I appropriately doff goggles?**

When doffing goggles follow the same process for doffing and storing masks. Remove goggles from the side. Goggles can be disinfected using a germicidal disinfectant. Adequately clean/disinfect the inside then the outside surfaces. Place on a clean paper towel with your name on them.

### **Can I buy the clips for the side of my prescription glasses?**

Yes if you are not on one of the COVID units. Ensure that the clips conform to ANSI Z87.1 standards.

### **Can I still wear my contact lenses?**

There is no evidence to suggest contact lens wearers are more at risk of acquiring COVID-19 than eyeglass wearers. Contact lens wearers should continue to practice safe contact lens wear and care hygiene habits. Eye protection should be worn as per the above guidelines.

### **If I prefer a face shield, where do I get one?**

Talk to your unit leadership about where these can be obtained. Follow the [extended use/re-use guidelines](#).

### **What if I forget my eye protection?**

See your supervisor.

### **Why do we recommend people that are fully vaccinated wear a mask?**

Due to recent surges of COVID variants, vaccinated people must continue to follow guidance to protect themselves and others, including wearing a well-fitted mask, [physical distancing](#) (at least 6 feet), avoiding crowds, avoiding poorly ventilated spaces, covering coughs and sneezes, and [washing hands](#) often. Fully vaccinated people should still watch for [symptoms of COVID-19](#), especially following an exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. If symptoms develop, all people – regardless of vaccination status – should isolate and be clinically evaluated for COVID-19, including COVID-19 testing, if indicated.

CDC will continue to evaluate and update public health recommendations for vaccinated people as more information, including on new variants, becomes available.

### **Does the universal PPE guidelines apply to every member of the workforce working anywhere in the Nebraska Medicine Enterprise?**

The universal PPE guidelines applies to ALL employees although specific mask types may vary by site of work. Please reference the guidance found earlier in this document.

**Should visitors be wearing face masks?**

Visitors will be limited on campus except for certain circumstances. (See visitor [policy](#) for detail). Visitors who do not have their own mask will be provided a medical grade mask upon entry. If a visitor develops symptoms while on the premises, that person should be asked to leave.

**Should all patients be wearing face masks?**

Yes. Patients with symptoms concerning for COVID-19, or other respiratory illness, will be provided a medical grade face mask and isolated per our existing policies. Patients without symptoms concerning for COVID-19 will be provided medical grade masks. Once roomed, it is recommended that all patients continue to wear their face mask to mitigate exposure risk. Inpatients should wear a mask as they are able when others are in the room or when they exit the room. This is an evolving situation and will be reevaluated as needed.

**In procedural areas, can a single procedural mask be worn continuously, including across different cases?**

Yes, a single mask can be worn across different cases and between cares of different patients. Masks must be changed if they become wet or contaminated during a case. The routine use of face shields will decrease the likelihood of this occurring and is encouraged. For detailed guidance, please review the information available on the web at:

<https://www.nebraskamed.com/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19/guidelines-for-patients-with-covid-in-the-perioperative-environment.pdf>

**I work in a clinical setting. How can I eat when I am supposed to wear a procedural/surgical mask?**

Eating is not permitted in clinical areas. If you are working in a clinical setting, follow the removal and reuse instructions as is outlined in the [Extended Use and Limited Reuse of Disposable Facemasks, Respirators and Protective Eyewear document](#).

**I work in a clinical setting. How can I drink when I am supposed to wear a procedural mask?**

Drinking is permitted in designated locations in clinical areas. If you need to drink, ensure you are able to be distanced a minimum of six feet from others, perform hand hygiene, remove the mask, drink and then replace your procedure/surgical mask. If you are in a shared airspace with others and are not fully vaccinated, more than six feet may be necessary. Please follow the guidelines on appropriate doffing found at the end of this document.

**Are staff allowed to take off their masks to eat while on hospital or clinic premises?**

Staff can take off their masks to eat and drink when they are on premises, in a location where they can maintain a minimum distance of six feet between colleagues. Colleagues are asked to work with their supervisor to determine a schedule and stipulations to more safely take breaks.

Please follow guidelines on appropriate doffing found at the end of this document.

**If I need to leave the facility and come back later in my shift, what should I do?**

Every effort should be made to preserve supplies of face masks. You may remove your mask and store it for short periods of time as noted at the end of this document and then reuse the mask.

**Can I use my procedure/surgical mask between patients, including those with confirmed COVID-19, suspect COVID-19, other respiratory viruses or patients in whom none of these apply?**

Yes. Your procedure/surgical mask should be used according to the [Extended Use and Reuse guidelines](#), which ensures careful and deliberate handling of the mask to prevent both self-contamination and cross contamination. Under conditions of extended use or reuse, a face shield is preferentially worn over the procedure/surgical mask as the form of eye protection. However, direct care of patients with known or suspected COVID-19 requires use of N95 respirators or PAPRs.

**Can staff gather in break rooms and other places to eat and relax, and if so, should they leave their procedure/surgical masks on?**

In any setting where more than one individual is gathered, even in private areas, masks must remain in place. If colleagues are eating or drinking, physical distancing should occur.



## Visual Guidance

The following images are intended to provide clarification to avoid potential errors in the proper use and re-use of face masks.



*Figure 1 – These images on the left show the correct way to store mask when not in use. Notice the exterior of the mask is facing DOWN.*



*Figure 2 – These images on the right demonstrate the wrong way to place mask when not in use. Notice the exterior of the*



*Figure 3 - This image shows the correct way to store a surgical mask when not in use. Notice the exterior of the mask is facing DOWN and ties are placed carefully away from the inside of the mask*



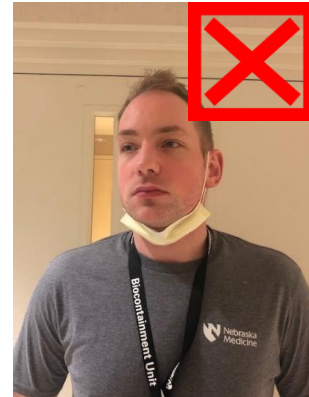
*Figure 4 - This image demonstrates the wrong way to store surgical mask when not in use. Notice the exterior of the mask if facing up and ties are touching the interior of the mask. This is not correct*



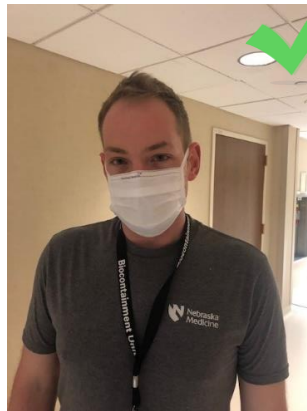
## Visual Guidance Continued



*Figure 5 – This image demonstrates inappropriate wear of the procedure mask. Procedure mask should not be pulled under mouth*



*Figure 6 – This image demonstrates inappropriate wear of the procedure mask. Procedure mask should not be pulled under chin*



*Figure 9 – This image demonstrates approved wear of face mask. Facemask is shown secured over nose and mouth*



*Figure 7 - This image demonstrates inappropriate use of procedure mask. Procedure mask should not be kept on the elbow when not in use*



*Figure 8 - This image demonstrates inappropriate wear of the surgical mask. Surgical mask should not hang from lower ties*