

UW Medicine Extended-Use Masking Policy

The safety of every UW Medicine patient, staff, trainee, and faculty member is our top priority. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rapidly evolve and new information becomes available, we have carefully considered the optimal strategies to ensure the safety of our patients and workforce, anticipating short and long-term needs. We have also heard your concerns and want our workforce to feel safe and confident as they continue to respond to this pandemic. Given increasing evidence of widespread transmission of COVID-19 and to mitigate the use of masks overall, beginning today, **all members of the UW Medicine workforce will be given the option of using a single mask (surgical or procedural mask) that may be worn continuously, throughout their entire shift, while on the premises.** Please note that any staff member who has any symptoms of acute respiratory infection (such as fever, new cough, new shortness of breath, sore throat, body aches, loss of sense of smell) will not be allowed to work on the premises.

Implementation of extended use masking is a departure from standard approaches to infection prevention. This change is made based on the continued expansion of the local COVID-19 epidemic and is contingent on our ability to maintain adequate PPE supplies. Please note that **the ability to receive additional supplies of masks is not assured and all staff are entrusted with thoughtful and judicious use of their masks.** This mask policy, which includes surgical and procedural masks (and *not* N95 respirators), will serve to:

- protect our patients and other staff members should the health care worker be infected and experiencing very mild symptoms which may be hard to recognize or develop symptoms at work (a mask may decrease the risk of spreading infection), and
- protect our health care workers should they come in close contact with a patient who may be infected without symptoms or has symptoms that have not yet been recognized.

This practice requires your participation regarding:

- strict adherence to proper extended use/reuse of masks
- strict adherence to hand hygiene
- proper mask use and hygiene – including 1) wearing the mask as directed to cover the mouth and nose, and 2) avoiding touching the mask and your face.
- Staff members who are already on site should secure a face mask (surgical or procedural mask) and wear it continuously until they leave the hospital.
- Before putting on the mask, be sure to perform hand hygiene, and remember not to touch your face after putting the mask in place. The mask should cover your nose and mouth.
- **Please remember that conservation of our personal protective equipment (PPE) supply is essential, so take and use only one mask per shift – unless the mask becomes visibly soiled or damaged.**
- Please take a moment to review the FAQs (page 2)

Frequently Asked Questions: UW Medicine Optional Extended Use Masking

Why are we providing the option to wear extended use masks (surgical or procedural masks)?

We are continuing to learn new information as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves and are foremost focused on the safety of our healthcare workers. We have heard your concerns and want our healthcare workers to feel safe and confident as they continue to respond to this pandemic. Currently, there is widespread community transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in our area. We are learning that patients may be infected without having symptoms or prior to developing symptoms. Sometimes these symptoms can be mild leading to a delay in recognition in both ourselves and our patients. This policy will also lead to PPE conservation as our mask stockpile at UW Medicine is not assured and all staff are entrusted with thoughtful and judicious use of their masks. For these reasons, this new policy provides the following added safety:

- Patient safety: if a workforce member has no or very mild symptoms of infection that are hard to recognize or develops symptoms during their shift at work, the face mask may contain viral particles and decrease the risk to patients or others working at our facilities.
- Workforce safety: if a workforce member comes into close contact with an individual (patient, visitor, staff) who either has no signs of infection or has developed symptoms but has not yet been identified as having symptoms, the face mask provides a level of protection against infectious droplets from those individuals. In many work environments, it is difficult to maintain 6 feet of separation.

Why are we providing the option to wear a face mask and not an N95 respirator?

COVID-19 is thought to be transmitted primarily through droplets. A face mask provides protection by containing these droplets if someone has the virus and by preventing exposure to the virus if someone has close contact with another person who is infected. N95 respirators are used by nurses and providers caring for patients in airborne/respirator precautions. As a reminder, airborne/respirator/contact with eye protection precautions are required while the patient is undergoing aerosol-generating procedures. An N95 respirator is not required to prevent droplet transmission during routine care aside from performing one of the aerosol-generating procedures.

Does the UW Medicine Optional Extended Use Masking policy apply to every member of the workforce working anywhere at UW Medicine?

This policy applies to employees working in buildings or areas (i.e., home care) where clinical care is provided or when walking through common areas in those same buildings.

- Workers working in private individual offices or in nonclinical settings where individuals are reliably separated by more than 6 feet, do not need to wear the mask in those settings. When walking through common areas in buildings where care is delivered, however, the mask policy applies.

Workers that work in nonclinical buildings are excluded.

- These employees should practice principles of social distancing, respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene.
- If these workers visit buildings where clinical care is provided, the mask policy applies as above.

I am involved with research at a satellite site (i.e., South Lake Union), does this policy apply to me?

No, unless you visit any common spaces in buildings where clinical care is provided.

Should visitors be wearing face masks?

No. Visitors will not be instructed to wear face masks. The visitor policy limits visitors to our facilities. If a visitor develops symptoms while on the premises, that person should be provided a face mask and asked to leave.

Should all patients be wearing face masks?

No. Patients with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will be provided a face mask and isolated per our existing policies. Once roomed, symptomatic patients no longer need to wear the face mask as long as their providers are wearing appropriate personal protective equipment.

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

Yes, a single mask can be worn across different cases. Masks must be changed, however, if they become wet or contaminated during a case.

I work in a clinical setting, how can I eat when I am supposed to wear a face mask (surgical or procedural)?

Eating is not permitted in clinical areas. See below

I work in a clinical setting. How can I drink when I am supposed to wear a face mask (surgical or procedural)?

Drinking is only permitted in designated areas. If you need to drink, ensure you are 6 feet away from others, perform hand hygiene, remove the mask, drink, and then replace your face mask.

How do I handle the mask when I'm ready to eat/drink during a break?

In nonclinical settings, where eating and drinking is not restricted, take the following steps to remove the mask:

1. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
2. Prepare clean surface (paper towel) or paper bag.
3. Remove the face mask by grabbing strings by ears and carefully removing mask from face.
4. Store mask carefully to avoid contamination to other surfaces and
5. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub

After you have finished eating or drinking, take the following steps to replace the mask:

1. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
2. Remove mask carefully and don mask ensuring clean side is to your face, taking care to avoid touching face or eyes
3. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub

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

Every effort should be made to limit exit and entry to the facility during your shift to preserve supplies of face masks. If you leave the facility, the face mask must be discarded and a new one obtained upon re-entry.

Can I use my face 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 face mask must be handled carefully to prevent both self-contamination and cross-contamination. Under conditions of extended use or reuse, a **face shield must be worn over the face mask when caring for patients in droplet/contact precautions as the form of eye protection and to reduce potential splatter to the mask.**

FOLLOW ATTACHED JOB AID

Should employees be wearing the mask at home and should their families wear masks?

Employees should discard their masks when leaving the hospital. They should not wear them home. There is generally no reason for employees and their families to wear masks at home. Social distancing and taking precautions like washing your hands, using hand sanitizer, and cleaning surfaces frequently should be appropriate for home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided this guidance.

Can I wear my mask out of the hospital and use it on the bus or if I am going to a place where there will be other people?

No. The mask needs to be discarded as you are leaving the hospital. It should not be worn on public transportation or in other places outside the hospital.

Are staff expected to go outside of the hospital premises to eat to take off their masks, or are they allowed to take off their masks to eat while on hospital premises?

Staff can take off their masks to eat and drink when they are on premises in a location where they can maintain a distance of 6 feet. It is preferable to minimize going outside to the extent possible to prevent the need to discard masks and to help the hospital preserve mask supplies.

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

Staff should adhere to the same principles of social distancing when together in break rooms, conference rooms or other spaces. They should allow 6 feet distance from others and should take the appropriate precautions involving hand hygiene and not touching their faces. Masks can be taken off in such areas for eating and drinking. To limit the number of people in a break room, staff should consider staggering their break times.

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Goggle/Full Plastic Face-Shield Re-Use Checklist

(For All Patients, including COVID-19)

- Rigid hard sided goggles and plastic full-face shields are reused via the checklist
- Obtain new goggles/plastic full-face shields in unit’s designated area

Discard/Do not use goggles if

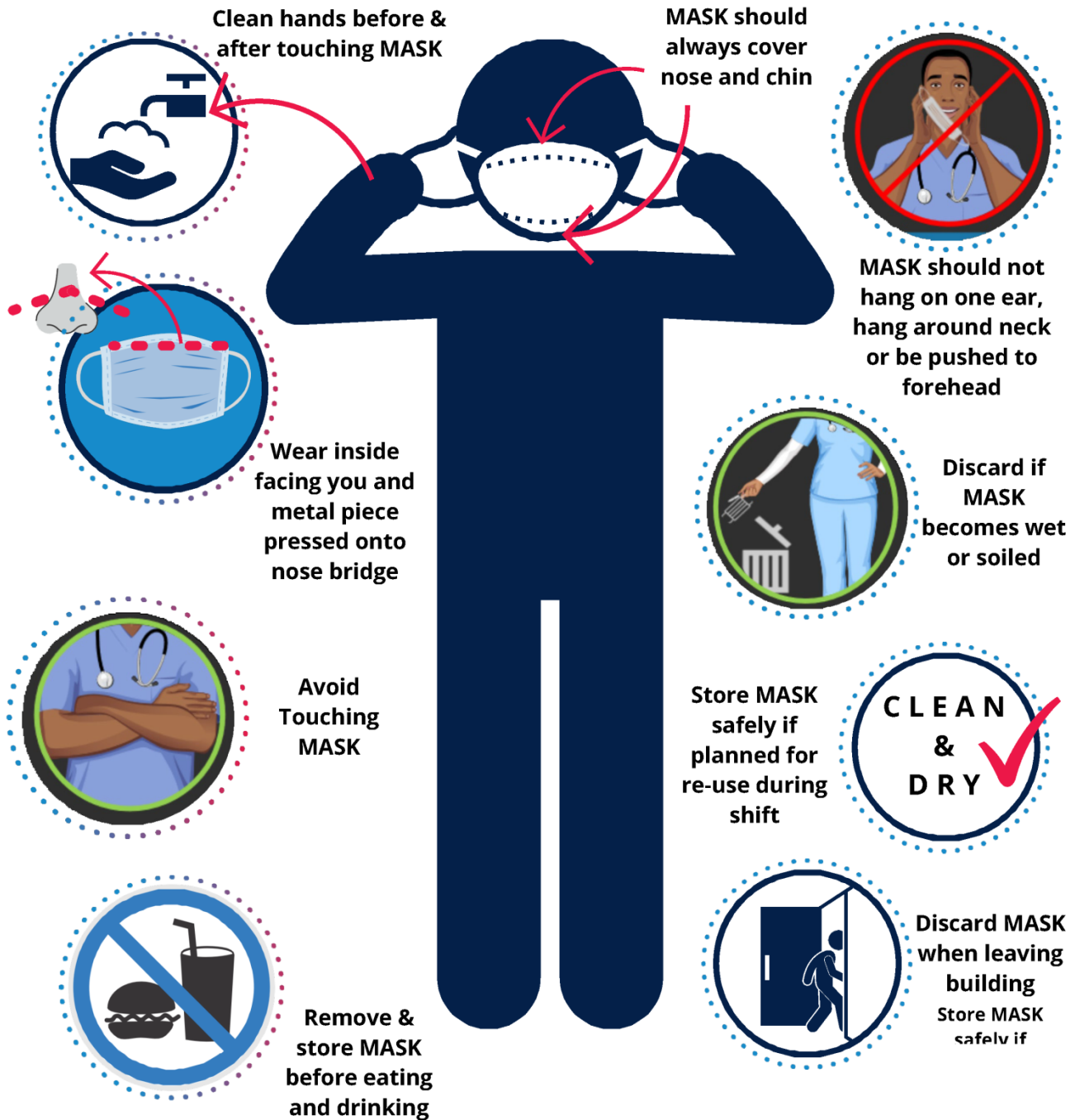
- No longer fits well or are damaged or degraded



DOFFING Procedure

Steps	Action
Ad1	If wearing gown and gloves, doff per PPE checklist (Airborne versus Special Droplet/Contact)
2	Perform hand hygiene, don clean gloves
3	Removing Goggles or Plastic Full-Face Shield: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obtain EPA approved wipe and set aside on clean surface ○ Goggles: Remove goggles by using both hands on either side of the face, pull them out and away from the body ○ Plastic Full-Face Shield: Remove face shield by grabbing strap and holding tension, pull straps up and over head and lift away from face. ○ Use wipe to thoroughly clean all plastic surfaces of goggles or face shield (and the elastic and foam band on the face shield) sufficiently applying disinfectant to each surface to ensure appropriate contact time ○ Set disinfected PPE on clean surface and allow to dry
4	Perform hand hygiene and don clean gloves
5	Carefully remove all other PPE <i>per procedure on checklist</i> (i.e. Surgical mask and/or N95 respirator)
6	Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene
7	Store clean goggles or plastic full-face shield in a labeled paper bag to reuse again by same Healthcare Worker only
8	At end of shift: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goggles: place in designated area to reuse on your next shift • Plastic Full-Face Shield: Dispose of at the end of your shift

Important Safety Tips for Extended-use Face Masks



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