

Face Mask Selection

This protocol provides guidance in the selection of face masks while at work.

In office settings – employees who are fully vaccinated are no longer required by the company to wear a face covering UNLESS the state/local government has a different requirement. State-specific information is subject to frequent changes - it is the responsibility of each leader to keep up to date on state requirements which can be found at [STATE].gov.

For those not vaccinated, face coverings are required where physical distancing is not possible.

In all settings or circumstances where there may be client or patient contact, masks will be required regardless of vaccination status.

- Surgical masks will be provided each day for employees who have client/patient contact at no cost to the employee

Mask Use and Selection:

Given the new, more contagious variants of the COVID-19 virus, the use of a surgical mask is strongly recommended in all care delivery settings.

The ED/Branch Manager and nursing leadership are responsible to ensure that masks (and all PPE) are securely stored and distributed appropriately (one mask per day for all employees with client/patient contact – offered at no cost to the employee), that all employees are educated, and that PPE conservation efforts are in place in the event that there are shortages.

Mask Selection

When should a cloth mask be used?

The use of cloth masks is not recommended but does offer greater protection than no mask.

When should a surgical mask be used?

- A surgical mask is used in all service delivery settings and for those who are at higher risk.
- A surgical mask is preferred in office settings when physical distancing is not possible
- The mask may be removed while eating after leaving common areas, while staying at least 6 feet from others and when outdoors.
- Surgical masks must be provided daily to all employees with client and patient contact at no cost to the employee.

What is an N95 or KN95 mask and when should I wear one?

An N95 mask provides a greater degree of filtration and is reserved for use when:

- Providing direct care for, or being in close proximity to persons infected with COVID-19
- Performing aerosol-generating procedures like deep suctioning, tracheostomy care, or aerosolized medication administration.

When using the N95 or KN95 mask:

- Ensure that all employees who will use an N95 mask have received education on its use, including seal checks, donning and doffing procedures, conservation and storage for reuse.
 - Employees issued an n95 mask must be “fit tested”. Contact your Director, Clinical Practice should you need a fit test kit and training on how to conduct the fit test.
- In order to conserve PPE, the N95 mask may be reused by the same person, for extended periods and for multiple days. It should be discarded when the physical integrity of the mask is no longer viable (e.g., soiled, wet, torn, elastics broken down, etc.).
 - In residential settings, a team member may wear the same n95 mask throughout the day and for multiple days.
 - In visit-based settings (such as Home Health, Home Care and Hospice), a different N95 should be worn for each patient/client.
 - N95 Masks should not be stored for reuse in air-tight containers (like a Ziplock bag). A paper bag should be used with the team member or patient/client name on the bag.
 - The respirator must be stored for at least five calendar days between use and kept away from water or moisture.
 - The respirator cannot be used more than five days total.
 - When removed, the n95 mask should immediately be placed in the paper bag and not left on surfaces (table, countertop, etc.).

Your Region Director of Clinical Practice will provide direction and support in these instances.