

Face Mask Selection

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

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.

In office settings, surgical masks are preferred over cloth masks.

The ED/Branch Manager and nursing leadership are responsible to ensure that masks (and all PPE) are securely stored and distributed appropriately (per our PPE use protocols), that our team members are educated, and that PPE conservation efforts are in place.

Our Procurement department is working to increase our supplies of surgical masks – please use the PPE request form to order more masks for your team.

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 strongly recommended in all service delivery settings and for those who are at higher risk, come in contact with direct-care staff and those we serve.
- A surgical mask is preferred in office settings
- The mask may be removed while eating after leaving common areas and while staying at least 6 feet from others.
- Weather permitting, staff are encouraged to open a window or remove mask for eating while outdoors
- Surgical masks 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.).
- Store your surgical mask between uses in a paper bag

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 team members who will use an N95 mask have received education on its use, including seal checks, donning and doffing procedures, conservation and storage for reuse.

- N95 masks typically require a “fit test” procedure. The FDA has recognized the limited supply of fit test kits, and will not enforce if unable to secure a supply
 - We have a limited supply of fit test kits, which are reserved for use in communities/homes experiencing an outbreak. 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 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.
 - 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.
 - When removed, the 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.