UNIVERSAL MASKING REQUIREMENTS FOR STAFF, PATIENTS, AND VISITORS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Consistent with the County Health Officer's September 12, 2022 Health Order Requiring Use of Face Coverings in Higher-Risk Settings, the California Department of Public Health's September 20, 2022 Guidance for Use of Face Masks in Healthcare Settings, and the County of Santa Clara's face covering requirements for County personnel dated January 5, 2023, and in an effort to continue to minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19 among our workforce, patients, and the community, the Hospitals and Clinics have instituted a comprehensive universal surgical masking policy. **All persons working, visiting, or receiving care in the Hospitals and Clinics must comply with this policy. Failure to comply will result in denial of entry to the facilities, except for patients needing emergency care.**   This policy is subject to change based on availability of supplies and evolving clinical guidance in this area.

NOTE: Unvaccinated individuals are subject to the same face covering restrictions as all other individuals.   In addition, unvaccinated individuals are no longer required to receive and report the results of a COVID-19 test.

Definitions

- "**Workforce member**" includes all employees, volunteers, students, contractors, medical staff, allied health professionals, and other individuals who regularly perform work at County Health System facilities.
- "**Healthcare Setting**" for purposes of this policy refers to all indoor places where healthcare (including behavioral health care) is provided to patients and includes, but is not limited to, acute care facilities, long term acute and non-acute care facilities, inpatient rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, home healthcare, vehicles where healthcare is delivered (e.g., mobile clinics), jails and correctional facilities, and outpatient facilities, such as dialysis centers, ambulatory clinics, physicians offices, community testing and vaccination sites, and other locations where healthcare is provided. Healthcare Settings does not include buildings and facilities, such as administrative offices, where healthcare is not provided.
- "**Visitor**" refers to anyone who enters a County facility and is not a workforce member.
- "**Patient**" refers to anyone who enters a Healthcare Setting for the purpose of receiving healthcare.

Face Covering Requirements for Non-Healthcare Settings

Face coverings are no longer required in buildings and facilities that are not Healthcare Settings. However, the County Health Officer continues to strongly recommend their use in all indoor settings, especially when meeting in groups, or working for long periods of time in close proximity to others. More protective face coverings, including KN95, KF94, and N95s, are strongly recommended by the Health Officer.

Face Covering Requirements for Patients and Visitors in Healthcare Settings

All patients and visitors 2 years or older, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear a face mask consistent with this policy at all times while inside any Healthcare Setting. There are no exceptions for areas that are not open to the public.

- Surgical masks must be worn by patients and visitors indoors at Healthcare Settings. Individuals who do not already have a surgical mask will be provided one upon arrival, except at community mass testing and vaccination sites as indicated below. The surgical mask must be worn for the entire day or visit, as long as the mask is not moist, torn, or contaminated. Replacement masks will be provided if the mask becomes moist, torn, or contaminated. Patients and visitors at community mass vaccination and testing sites may wear other types of approved face masks instead of surgical masks.
- The following visitors and patients are exempt from wearing masks. Please consult with a manager or supervisor to determine appropriate alternative face coverings or accommodation:
    i. Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering.
    ii. Persons who are hearing impaired, or actively communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Signage will be posted at the facility entrances to alert visitors and patients that they cannot enter if they are not wearing a face covering consistent with this policy or meet one of the narrow exceptions.
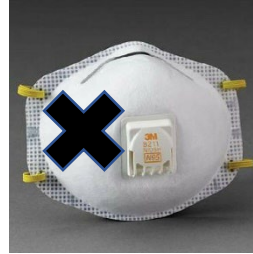
Face Covering Requirements for Workforce Members in Healthcare Settings

- **Face Coverings consistent with this policy are required for all Workforce Members regardless of vaccination status** when they are working on site in all indoor settings in any Healthcare Setting. There are no exceptions for areas that are not open to the public.   In addition, Workforce Members who are involved in direct patient care , whether indoors or not, must follow the current Guidelines for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while caring for patients during COVID-19 pandemic.

SANTA CLARA
VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER
Hospital & Clinics

O'CONNOR HOSPITAL
A COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

ST. LOUISE
REGIONAL HOSPITAL
A COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Hospital Command Center

- **Exception for Medical or Mental Condition or Disability**. Workforce Members who cannot wear a face covering due to a medical or mental health condition or disability or are hearing-impaired may request a reasonable accommodation allowing them not to do so.   Any Workforce Member who believes they may have a medical or mental health condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering should contact their supervisor or manager and ask about the reasonable accommodation process. Workforce Members exempted from wearing face coverings due to a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability must wear an effective alternative, if an effective alternative exists and is consistent with PPE policy, and as approved by Employee Health.
- **Exception for temporary mask removal.**   Workforce Members in Healthcare Settings may briefly remove their face covering for the following reasons but must put it back on as soon as they are finished:
    - When eating or drinking at the workplace. However, Workforce Members:
        - May not congregate with other coworkers to eat or drink indoors, including in kitchens/lunchrooms in Healthcare Settings.
    - When communicating with a hearing-impaired person where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
    - For specific tasks which cannot feasibly be performed with a face covering (e.g., using an inhaler or taking medicine).
    - When alone and inside a personal office that is fully enclosed by four walls and a door.
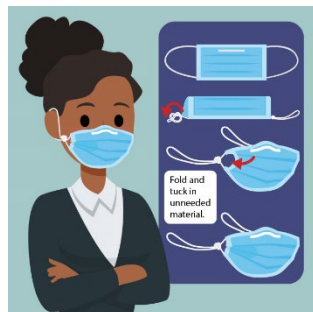
Masking Practice and Acceptable Face Coverings

- In Healthcare Settings, face coverings must be either a surgical mask or N95 respirator and, if caring for patients, any other required personal protective equipment as indicated in current Guidelines for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while caring for patients during COVID-19 pandemic.
- If Workforce Members are required to use respirators to perform their jobs, the County will provide those respirators.
- A face covering must:
    i. Cover from the bridge of the nose to the bottom of the chin at all times and should fit snugly against the sides of your face. Do not wear your mask below your nose or with the top tucked underneath your chin.
    ii. Hook around your ears or tie behind the head.
    iii. Have no visible holes or openings.
    iv. Not be soiled or contaminated.
    v. If cloth, be constructed of tightly woven fabric of at least two layers.
- Vented masks are not allowed under any circumstances. The valves on these masks filter air breathed in, but not breathed out. Because of this, these face masks do not protect the non-wearer (source control). Examples of these masks are pictured below:

- Cloth masks should have at least two layers of materials and you should not be able to see through them.
- Neck gaiters, scarves, ski masks, balaclavas, bandanas, turtlenecks, collars, and single-layer cloth masks are not allowed because they either fit too loosely or are too thin to offer enough protection.
- Face shields (plastic barriers that typically extend from the forehead to the chin) are not equivalent to face coverings and do not fulfill face covering requirements.
- It is strongly recommended to minimize the frequent removal of masks during the day as this can cause contamination and self-inoculation.
- To provide the most protective effect (filtration), the mask needs to have a good fit.

Patients and Visitors: Methods that patients and visitors can employ to obtain a good fit on their surgical mask are indicated below.
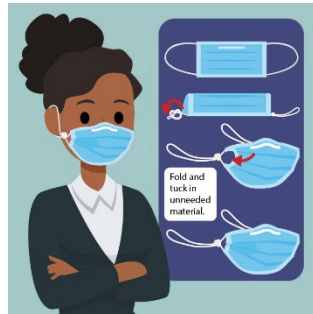
- Knotting and Tucking of surgical mask: To improve fit of surgical mask, knot the ear loops where they join the edge of the mask, then fold and tuck the unneeded material under the edges. https://youtu.be/UANi8Cc71A0

  - Nose wire: Nose wires prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask. Bend the nose wire over your nose to fit close to your face.

  - Double masking: Surgical masks can be layered underneath a cloth mask.

Based on current evidence, it is not recommended to wear two surgical masks or a cloth mask underneath a surgical mask. The cloth mask should push the edges of the disposable mask against your face. The cloth mask should be dry and clean.

- **Workforce Members:** For individuals who **are** involved in direct patient care or regularly come within close contact of patients, the current Guidelines for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) while caring for patients during COVID-19 pandemic in the facilities will apply.   For individuals who are only required to wear a surgical mask, the following methods can be employed to enhance fitting of the surgical mask.

  - Knotting and Tucking of surgical mask: To improve fit of surgical mask, knot the ear loops where they join the edge of the mask, then fold and tuck the unneeded material under the edges. https://youtu.be/UANi8Cc71A0

    o Nose wire: Nose wires prevent air from leaking out of the top of the mask. Bend the nose wire over your nose to fit close to your face.

    o Double masking: Surgical mask can be layered underneath a cloth mask. Based on current evidence, it is not recommended to wear two surgical masks or a cloth mask underneath a surgical mask. If an individual believes they are unable to achieve a good fit with knotting and tucking of surgical mask and adjustment of the nose wire, then they may choose to wear a dry and clean cloth mask over the surgical mask. The cloth mask should push the edges of the disposable mask against your face.

- All masks must be kept dry and clean at all times. Contaminated or soiled masks must be removed.
- Masks do not replace the need for hand washing and social distancing. Please continue to perform frequent hand hygiene, comply with social distancing measures, comply with COVID-19 testing requirements, and get vaccinated.
- Face shields are meant to protect the wearer's eyes. They are not meant for protection against respiratory droplets and aerosols. They are NOT a substitute for face mask.
- **Do not** wear a cloth mask or surgical mask with an N-95 respirator.

- A cloth mask or surgical mask must never be worn underneath an N-95 respirator since it might make it more difficult to breathe and may interfere with the fit of the N-95 respirator.
- A cloth mask or surgical mask must not be worn over an N-95 respirator. If there is a desire to minimize the risk of splash to the respirator, the staff should wear a face shield for eye/N-95 protection.

VIII. <u>References</u>

1. Guideline for the Use of Personal Protective Equipment while Caring for Patients in Hospitals and Clinics Facilities during COVID-19 Pandemic. 10212021 COVID-19 PPE Guidelines.pdf (sccgov.org)
2. Order of the Health Officer of the County of Santa Clara requiring use of face coverings in Higher Risk Settings, dated September 12, 2022. Health Order Requiring Use of Face Coverings in Higher-Risk Settings; and Rescission of Prior Health Orders - Emergency Operations Center - County of Santa Clara (sccgov.org)
3. Memorandum to County Executive Leaders re COVID-19 Requirements Relating to Face Coverings for County Personnel and Visitors in County Facilities, dated January 5, 2023.
4. Face Coverings. Santa Clara County Public Health Department. https://www.sccgov.org/sites/covid19/Pages/public-health-orders-faq.aspx#face-coverings
5. State of California Department of Public Health, Guidance for Use of Face Coverings dated September 20, 2022 Guidance for Face Coverings (ca.gov)
6. Use and Care of Masks, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Use and Care of Masks | CDC
7. Infection Control: Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) | CDC
8. Improve the Fit and Filtration of Your Mask to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19 https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/mask-fit-and-filtration.html
9. Brooks JT, Beezhold DH, Noti JD,et.al. Maximizing Fit for Cloth and Medical Procedure Masks to Improve Performance and Reduce SARS-CoV-2 Transmission and Exposure, 2021. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.ePub: 10 February 2021. http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7007e1

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