**Use of Barrier Masks**

KEY RECOMMENDATION:

Because of the increasing probability (related to the community spread) a patient or healthcare

worker could be exposed to a patient incubating COVID-19 in clinical settings, the health system is recommending healthcare workers wear a barrier mask while engaged in patient care activities.

A disposable facemask can be worn for several hours if not wet, distorted or touched while delivering patient care.

**IMPORTANT NOTE**: Due to limited mask supply, the recommendation for routinely wearing masks is currently restricted to healthcare workers involved in direct patient care activities.

Employees without direct patient care duties would have little to no benefit to routinely wearing a mask, but they are advised to keep physical distance of at least 6 feet from other employees.

*We recommend all healthcare workers wear a mask during all patient care interactions. The masks should be surgical or procedural, something that creates a physical barrier for mucus or secretions from being transmitted from one person to another. If you mask the provider, they are protected from the patient’s mucus membranes and secretions. If a provider is within 3-feet of a patient, the patient should have a general mask on for the rule-outs (i.e., under investigation) and positive COVID patient.*

**N-95 Respirators and PAPRs**

Purpose:

Existing CDC guidelines recommend a combination of approaches to conserve supplies while safeguarding healthcare workers in such circumstances. N-95 and PAPRs should be used during the course of any aerosol generating procedure (**See PPE recommendations**).

*The average size of a COVID micron, or particle or mucus is eight microns, and does not really staying in the air. Not everything that goes into the air does stays. When you cough up mucus that is a larger micron. Most COVID microns don’t tend to hang in the air, it drops to the ground. Transmissions stop when using standard droplet precautions.*

Existing guidelines recommend that healthcare institutions:

• Reuse can occur under the following conditions:

o N-95 respirators must only be used by a single healthcare worker.

o Use a full-face shield or a surgical mask over an N-95 respirator to reduce surface contamination of the respirator during patient encounters

**(See Respirator Limited Reuse guidelines)**

**Mask FAQs**

***What kind of mask should I wear?***

(**See PPE recommendations**)

***Who should wear a mask?***

• Frontline healthcare workers who provide direct patient care in ambulatory and inpatient settings.

***Can I wear the same mask into multiple exam rooms or patient rooms?***

Yes, but only if patients are not under airborne or droplet precautions or demonstrating active respiratory symptoms such as a cough AND you do not remove the mask between patient interactions. Once in place, you should avoid touching the mask with your hands. **(See Tips on wearing a mask correctly)**

***When should I discard the mask?***

Any mask should be discarded when:

• You exit an isolation room (Isolation precautions take precedence over routine mask use).

• Mask is visibly soiled, torn or damaged.

• Mask becomes damp.

• Mask becomes contaminated (e.g., mask is touched with a soiled hand, glove, sneeze