Instructions for Individual Extended Use Masks
Updated June 2, 2020

We know the chance of contracting COVID-19 goes down as the distance between an infected and uninfected person goes up. However, physical distancing in the workplace is not always possible. To provide an additional level of infection prevention, individual extended use masks (procedure masks, not N95 respirators) are being provided for all employees working on-site at UNC Health and the UNC School of Medicine.

Please note that, because of the risk of transmission of the virus even when the infected person is asymptomatic, wearing an extended use mask is now required of all on-site employees. It is important that we all use these to ensure everyone's safety.

When using masks, the below instructions must be followed to maintain safety for yourself and others while conserving our supply of masks. These instructions are based on CDC guidance for extended use of masks and the best available scientific evidence and may change based on mask availability of masks.

**When do I receive and put on my individual extended use mask?**

- At the beginning of your shift to care for patients or working closely with co-workers, you will receive a new mask. Homemade masks should not be used.
- Perform hand hygiene (hand sanitizer or wash with soap), and then put on your procedure mask.

**When should my individual extended use mask be discarded and replaced?**

- The mask must be removed/discarded if soiled, damaged, or becomes hard to breathe through.
- The mask must be removed/discarded if worn into the room of a patient on any type of infection isolation precautions (e.g., Droplet, Contact, Enteric). Note: The mask does not need to be removed and discarded in protective precautions patient rooms (i.e., patient on protective precautions for immunocompromised status).
- The mask may be used for one work shift and then worn as you leave work until you exit UNC Health property. It can then be worn into work for your next shift until you reach your duty station (where you will receive a new mask). Then the prior day's mask must be removed and discarded.
- After any of the above conditions, a new replacement individual extended use mask should then be issued to you.

**How do I keep my individual extended use mask clean?**

- You must take care to minimize touching your procedure mask. If you need to touch or adjust your procedure mask you should immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Wearing makeup that will come in contact with masks is strongly discouraged because it will lead to soiling of the mask and limit the extended use of the mask.
- It is not recommended that you add a secondary mask over your individual extended use mask as it could lead to contamination from additional handling and limit breathability through the mask.

**During my shift, when should I remove my individual extended use mask?**
• Wear your mask continuously for the duration of your shift, except when leaving patient care or work areas to use the restroom or taking breaks to eat or drink.

How should I remove my individual extended use mask?
• If you are in a patient care area, you should leave that patient care area if you need to remove the procedure mask.
• Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the mask.
• Remove the mask either by releasing the ear loops simultaneously or by untying the neck tie followed by the upper tie and pulling away from your face and body. Do not remove by grasping the front of the mask.
• Procedure masks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface (patient-facing, potentially contaminated side) is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage.

What should I do with my mask at the end of my shift?
• You must wear a mask at all times inside UNC Health Facilities, including while you are walking to your first duty station and when you exit the building at end of your shift. Your daily mask (or a personal mask) must be worn after your shift as you exit the building and used when walking in at the start of your next work day.

Why is handling and storage of the mask so important?
• If contamination occurs to the mask’s surface, it can potentially be transferred by touch to the wearer’s hands and thus risk causing infection through touching of the mucous membranes of the face.

Why is discarding the mask necessary after wearing it into the room of a patient on isolation?
• Masks can become contaminated from patients who are infected with other common pathogens such as influenza, RSV, MRSA, VRE, Clostridium difficile, norovirus, etc. These pathogens could then contaminate the hands of the wearer, and in turn be transmitted to others.

Please Note: For COVID-19 confirmed or COVID-19 rule-out patients, respirators (N95 or PAPR/CAPR) should be worn. The N95 respirators worn for COVID-19 confirmed or COVID-19 rule-out patients are SINGLE USE and must be discarded in an appropriate waste or collection bin after each use (i.e. every time you exit the patient room).

Reference: