FAQ: Faculty and Staff Masking

Update 4/28/20

1. Who will receive an isolation mask?
   a. All persons entering an Ohio State Wexner Medical Center facility will be given an isolation mask upon entering the building. This includes faculty, staff, patients and visitors. Read more about patient masking [here](#).

2. What type of mask will I be given upon entering a Wexner Medical Center facility?
   a. You will receive an isolation mask – not N95 respirator masks.
   b. Some isolation masks are ear loop face masks with elastic bands that go around your ears. Others may tie. They come in a variety of colors.

3. When should the isolation mask be worn?
   a. Isolation masks are required to be worn while at work when you are within six (6) feet of another person (i.e. employee, patient or visitor) or in a public space (i.e. hallway, lobby or serving line in the BistrOH!).
   b. If you are working in an isolated space (such as your office), you can take your mask off.

4. How will I receive an isolation mask?
   a. One (1) mask and paper bag will be provided at the temperature screening stations when you arrive to work.
   b. If you need a new mask that day, please have your ID badge ready for scanning.
   c. If you are re-wearing yesterday’s mask, please don the mask prior to entering the building.

5. What if I need a replacement mask during my shift because my mask is soiled?
   a. If the mask becomes soiled, follow proper doffing and hand hygiene.
   b. New masks are available on your unit. You will need to show your employee badge. If you are on a COVID unit, contact your charge nurse to get a new mask.

6. Will wearing an isolation make me safer?
   a. Due to the pandemic reaching a tipping point in our community, there’s now more widespread risk of transmission in the workplace between co-workers.
   b. A combined approach of social distancing, including among co-workers, universal masking, along with daily temperature and symptom monitoring, is the most efficient way that we can protect our patients and staff during this unprecedented pandemic.
   c. An increasing number of peer health care organizations, professional societies and other national organizations have begun recommending that staff wear face masks while at work.
   d. While the data is not yet clear on the utility of this practice, we’re supportive of moving forward with this process.
7. For faculty and staff not involved in direct patient care, what do I do with my isolation mask after my shift? Can I take it home?
   a. If your mask is not grossly soiled, do not throw it away!
      i. Use the provided paper bag, labeled with your name, to store your mask.
      ii. Perform hand hygiene.
      iii. Remove the mask by grabbing the elastic or ties at the back of the ears/head.
      iv. The mask should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is inside the fold.
      v. Place the mask in the paper bag and then perform hand hygiene.
      vi. Take the bagged mask home with you to don before your next shift.
   b. If your mask stays clean, you can continue to use it as long as you like. There is not a maximum number of days or times that it can be used.
   c. Direct patient caregivers are encouraged to get a new mask daily. Refer to mask and eye protection guidance for when to re-use and dispose of PPE.

8. How do I eat or drink with my isolation mask?
   a. You can remove your mask while maintaining social distancing to eat and drink.
   b. Follow proper technique for donning/doffing/hand hygiene and store in a paper bag when not wearing the mask. This includes:
      i. Perform hand hygiene.
      ii. Remove the mask by grabbing the elastic or ties at the back of the ears/head.
      iii. Use a paper bag to store your mask, and label the paper bag with your name.
      iv. The mask should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage.
      v. Place the mask in the paper bag and then perform hand hygiene.
   c. DO NOT put the mask in your pocket, wear on your arm, under your chin or have it hang over your ear. This increases the risk of self-contamination.

9. What is considered a safe container to store my isolation mask?
   a. Use a paper bag to store your mask. Label the paper bag with your name.
   b. We use a paper bag for mask storage because it allows air circulation to the mask and reduces humidity build-up on the mask compared to a plastic or zip-lock bag.

10. How do I know if my isolation mask is soiled and needs to be replaced?
    a. If the mask becomes grossly soiled, throw the mask away.
    b. If it becomes damaged or hard to breathe through, throw the mask away.

11. What are we doing to conserve our personal protection equipment (PPE) supply?
    a. Our supply team has been working tirelessly in the recent weeks to identify new manufacturers for PPE, including isolation masks, and continues to work with Battelle on re-sterilization of N95 respirator masks.
    b. While our inventory of PPE is more stable than it was a couple of weeks ago, we still need your cooperation and compliance with Wexner Medical Center’s PPE guidelines to conserve our PPE inventory so we can be prepared to care for a surge of COVID patients safely.
12. Where do I place my N95 respirator mask for re-sterilization?
   a. Place all N95 respirator masks in the marked bins in your clinical area. If you cannot find one, ask the charge nurse.
   b. **DO NOT** place trash or any other items other than N95 masks in the bins.
   c. N95 masks must be free of makeup, lipstick, lip balms, cream or lotions. Do not wear these products if you anticipate wearing an N95 mask.

13. What are the personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for patient care?
   a. Refer to the Inpatient Isolation Precautions for details.

14. Will patients and visitors entering our facilities also receive an isolation mask?
   a. When patients and visitors arrive at the hospital, they will be given an isolation mask to wear for the duration of their visit or admission, along with a paper bag for storage. If a patient arrives with a homemade mask, they will be asked to remove it and wear a provided isolation mask.
   b. Visitors will be asked to leave the facility if they have had symptoms in the past 24-hours or exposures in the last 14 days even if they are wearing a mask.

15. Can I wear a homemade mask?
   a. No. We can’t guarantee the safety of these masks, so please only wear masks approved by the medical center.
   b. We do not endorse the use of homemade masks, scarves or bandanas as personal protective equipment (PPE).

16. How best can I protect my family?
   a. Wash your hands as soon as you arrive home, before touching your family.
   b. More guidance is available from the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov).