

Additional guidance on masks for team members

March 25, 2020

On Tuesday, March 24, IU Health went live with the process of requiring that each team member with direct patient contact wear a mask for the duration of their shift. We are working to ensure all team members continue to have access to appropriate PPE, and are taking steps at our facilities to further mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and maintain a safe environment for our patients and team members.

While we refine and verify our process for mask sterilization procedures, the following interim guidelines will be put into place until permanent guidelines can be finalized and communicated.

Guidance on masks for patient contact:

- Every team member with direct patient contact will receive a yellow isolation mask (or similar) mask at the beginning of their shift. Masks may be worn continually for the entire shift unless they become wet or damaged.
- Team members who have direct patient contact include those who need to enter any patient care area. Office staff who work in areas separated from patient care or those traveling through public access areas do not need to wear masks. Team members who choose to bring their own PPE acquired from sources outside of IU Health, will be allowed to wear the non-IU Health provided PPE in non-patient facing areas.
- Team members will still participate in all isolation procedures. This guidance does not supersede other infection control practices.

Guidance on isolation masks in isolation rooms:

- Team members may wear their original issued mask into the isolation room.
- Team members should remove their mask when exiting the room of an isolation patient requiring a mask and discard per normal procedures, then don a new mask from the isolation cart.
- **Masks (Non N-95) worn into an isolation room should be discarded per normal procedures and will not be saved or sterilized**.

- Masks worn in patient rooms not subject to isolation procedures will be collected and sterilized regardless of length of wear.

Guidance on N-95 masks:

- Team members participating in aerosolized procedures should still don N-95 masks per infection prevention guidelines.
- N-95 Masks may be saved for same patient use throughout the shift. Please follow infection control guidelines for storage/handling of N-95s used during the shift.
- At the end of the shift, N-95 masks should be collected and placed into a separate container in the designated area.
- Team members should place used masks in a designated bin or container in the soiled utility room or other designated area. Masks should be carefully removed so as not to rip or damage the mask. Please note that some locations are still working through their process to collect masks and it may take a few days to have bins or containers in all areas. If you are unsure of where to place your mask, ask your supervisor if collection bins have been established.
- Other PPE items such as gloves or regular trash should not be mixed with mask collection containers.

Sterilizing masks for reuse:

Plans for sterilizing masks are underway and are in the process of being finalized. Sterilization of masks and reuse is a process that healthcare organizations across the country are implementing. Sterilization could save an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 masks per day, and will help us keep team members safe while at the same time help ensure an adequate supply of masks.

Please note that collected masks will not be redeployed for use by team members until sterilization procedures are verified. More information on sterilization and reuse procedures will be shared in the coming days.

IU Health will continue to do everything in our power to minimize the risk of the exposure of the novel coronavirus to you, your families and our patients.

Have questions?

To best manage and answer questions, team members are asked to please post all questions and comments to the Coronavirus FAQ page.