



## Health Advisory

April 3, 2020

### Universal Masking and Eye Protection

#### Capsule Summary:

**UNIVERSAL MASKING AND EYE PROTECTION IS RECOMMENDED FOR ALL CLINICAL ENCOUNTERS, AND MUST BE DONE ALONG WITH A ROBUST PROGRAM OF SOCIAL DISTANCING FOR WELL EMPLOYEES, IMMEDIATE EXCLUSION OF SICK EMPLOYEES, EXCELLENT HAND HYGIENE, AND FREQUENT SURFACE CLEANING.**

Background: COVID-19 can spread even when someone is not showing symptoms. New studies have identified this as a possible risk and has led to a change in guidance. Please note the following points on mask use in the health care setting.

1. Respirators (N95-type masks) are the best for protecting health care workers and should be used in any high risk (aerosolizing procedures). Surgical masks are approximately 40-50% efficient at filtering viral particles and should be used by providers and are required in patients for source control (e.g. catching any infected droplets). **CLOTH MASKS ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR MEDICAL PERSONNEL TO USE IN THE COURSE OF A CLINICAL ENCOUNTER.**
2. However, cloth masks may be acceptable for nonclinical staff (front office staff, housekeeping, security, food services, and vendors) to comply with a program of universal masking, in combination with hand hygiene, surface cleaning, spacing and screening.
3. Social distancing (staying 6 feet away from people) and handwashing are **THE MOST EFFECTIVE** methods of breaking the chain of contagion with COVID-19. Wearing a mask **DOES NOT** replace the importance of these strategies.
4. Another effective strategy is the screening all employees for fever or respiratory symptoms. This allows one more layer of protection from nosocomial infection in the health care setting. This can be easily done with a “checklist” which takes about 10

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Categories of Health Alert Messages:

**Health Alert:** Conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention

**Health Advisory:** Provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action

**Health Update:** Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action

**Health Information:** Provides general health information which is not considered to be of emergent nature

#### ***Promotion, preservation and protection of the community's health***

1221 Fulton Street, Fresno CA 93721 · P.O. Box 11867, Fresno, CA 93775

(559) 600-3200 · FAX (559) 600-7687

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- seconds to perform It can be automated with an app or web check-in. A template for a medical employer checklist is at our website: [www.fcdph.org/healthmessages](http://www.fcdph.org/healthmessages)
5. Clinical Pearl: MANY CASES OF VIRAL ILLNESS present with MID-DAY symptoms or early fatigue, so an employee can look well in the morning but feel sick as they quickly deplete energy reserves in the middle of a workday. MAKE SURE YOUR STAFF UNDERSTAND THAT CONSTANT VIGILANCE TO THEIR OWN HEALTH is important. Make sure supervisors and managers understand these tips.
  6. Wear goggles or face shields that can block droplets and use airtight devices for aerosolizing procedures.
  7. First response agencies should make surgical masks and hand sanitizer available for employees who interact with patients. Given that providers and patients with COVID-19 infection can be asymptomatic or presymptomatic, universal masking is also recommended when social distancing techniques are not feasible in the course of patient care.

**Bottom Line #1:** People who do not have surgical masks should not be working around patients.

**Bottom Line #2:** People without masks should not be allowed to work in or visit your clinical space.

### References:

[https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6914e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6914e2\\_x](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6914e2.htm?s_cid=mm6914e2_x)

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6914e1.htm>

<https://www.jhsph.edu/covid-19/articles/blue-right-mask-for-the-task.html>

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/news-perspective/2020/04/commentary-masks-all-covid-19-not-based-sound-data>

For more information on this issue please call Fresno County Department of Public Health Communicable Disease Investigation Program at (559) 600-3332.

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