

Portland Area Indian Health Service Guidance on Mask Usage for Patients, Visitors and Staff (rev 4/6/20)

On April 3, 2020 CDC issued recommendations that cloth facemasks should be worn in public whenever social distancing cannot be maintained and where community transmission of COVID-19 is occurring. As asymptomatic transmission has been well documented and community transmission is likely present in communities served by all service units of the Portland Area IHS, the following steps are recommended:

- All patients and visitors should wear a facemask at all times while in the clinic, regardless of whether they have symptoms or not.
- If the patient or visitor does not have a cloth facemask, they will be given a mask prior to entering the building.
- All staff will wear a surgical mask or N-95 respirator when interacting with patients.
- Staff that do not interact with patients will be given a small supply of masks. These should be worn if the staff member is going to walk through a patient care area. It is recommended that staff wear a mask when not able to maintain a distance of 6 feet from other staff and in common areas of the facility.
- Staff are able to take their mask off and store it when they are not interacting with patients.
- In order to conserve PPE, one mask may be re-used and discarded when it becomes soiled.
- Previous guidance on proper PPE usage during patient care activities remains in effect.

FAQs

May the clinic distribute donated cloth facemasks to patients and visitors? Yes, if the service unit has received donations of homemade masks from the community or from staff, these masks may be given to patients to take home and re-use. Use of donated, re-usable cloth masks will help the facility to conserve procedure masks for patient care activities as much as possible.

I have my own re-usable cloth mask. May I use it in the building? Yes, staff may bring their own mask to use when not engaging in patient care activities. This will assist in preserving PPE. Staff engaging with patients should continue to wear the appropriate PPE including a surgical facemask or N-95 respirator as previously recommended.

I do not work with patients. When should I be wearing my mask? Masks should be worn anytime you enter a patient care area (hallways, bathrooms, waiting room, screening/registration areas). Additionally, you should wear your mask when you cannot consistently maintain a 6 foot distance from co-workers such as in breakrooms or conference areas, during meetings that cannot be held outside, or when visiting a co-workers office.

How frequently should I change my mask? In order to conserve PPE, please utilize one mask for the day and discard it only if it becomes soiled. If your work activity does not require wearing a mask, you do not have to wear it. For example, if you work in an office alone or if you work outside alone, you do not need to wear it in your office or outside. Save the masks that you are given for the times when you do need it. When engaging with patients, if the mask has come in contact with a patient or their belongings such as during a physical examination, or during specimen collection OR a patient has coughed or sneezed in your direction, the mask or respirator should be discarded between patients.

How do I wear my mask? When you are wearing a mask, ensure that it covers your nose and mouth as it is intended to do. When you do not need to wear the mask, take it off and store it. Do not pull it down off your nose, under your chin, or wear it on one ear. Instructions on proper mask use can be found here.

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html?deliveryName=USCDC_2067-DM25135

If I do not have my own mask, how will I receive them? Each service unit and department will have an allotment of masks based on available supplies. Please discuss the mask allotment and distribution process with your supervisor and clinical leadership.

Please note that these changes are meant to be in line with the most recent CDC recommendations and are not due to any kind of increase in our threat level.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>
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Guidance on the use of masks and PPE is dynamic and subject to change. Please work closely with your chain of command to be aware of the most recent recommendations.

Finally, the use of facemasks does not replace social distancing and good hand hygiene as the primary means of preventing the spread of COVID-19. Please remember to continue to:

- Wash your hands frequently
- Stay home when you are sick
- Appropriately cover your coughs and sneezes
- Not touch your face with unwashed hands
- Stay home as much as possible when not at work and practice all of the above and good social distancing when you do leave home