**Utilization of Fabric Facemasks**

April 17, 2020

Very recent evidence from several sources strongly suggests that cloth face masks may reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 virus by means of filtration of microscopic droplets resulting from coughing, sneezing or even talking by the **wearer who may be infected and who may be completely asymptomatic**.  Although the evidence that cloth masks likely do not decrease the risk of infection by filtration of virus  from the standpoint of the **wearer who may be vulnerable to infection,** the consensus guideline is that universal use of cloth masks should be worn by all personnel who may be at risk for exposure to the virus.  Use of N95 masks or PPE of greater degree of protection must be reserved for use of first responders and health care providers.  Infection control will train all personnel on use, cleaning and disposal of cloth face guards/masks.

Currently, no health authority recommends universal masking in healthcare facilities to prevent COVID-19 spread. (Although, this may prevent a person from subconsciously touching their face.)

More information: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html)

* *Important Infection Prevention Note:* Fabric facemasks are **not** considered personal protective equipment (PPE). **They should not be used where entering the room of a patient on droplet precautions, including those with known or suspected COVID-19. Remove the cloth facemask and place appropriate PPE in these cases.**
* Fabric facemasks should be made of new, tight-weave cotton fabric (i.e. quilting cotton, denim, duck cloth, canvas, or twill).
* If an employee chooses to wear a fabric facemask, the facemask **should be worn at all times (except when entering isolation rooms, as noted above)**.
	+ **Facemasks should be worn over the mouth and nose and should not be worn dangling around the neck or on the chin/forehead.**
	+ Employees should not touch or adjust their facemask. If they do, they must immediately perform hand hygiene.
	+ When removing the mask immediately perform hand hygiene
	+ Fabric facemasks should be laundered in hot water daily.
	+ When not in use, fabric facemasks should be stored in a clean, closed paper bag or breathable container.

