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Your Mask Questions – Answered!

There are a lot of questions about masks, their effectiveness, and how long they can be used for. The guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Health (DOH) is being updated constantly.

What are the current recommendations for masks?

- Masks are required throughout The Jewish Home except when you are in your office/workspace AND at least 6 feet from other people.
- Extended use of masks is allowed per CDC and DOH guidance

Why are masks now extended use?

We are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, and the demand for ALL Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is extremely high. Due to the growing volume of cases (now >100,000 in the US), the likelihood of encountering shortages is high. All healthcare organizations have adopted the PPE conservation measures to ensure there are adequate supplies throughout the pandemic. The risk of transmission during extended use is thought to be very low.

How about The Jewish Home? Do we have enough?

Yes, we have enough if everyone does their part and uses conservation measures, one per day. The Jewish Home is projected to have adequate supplies. Our Infection Prevention Nurse, Greg Lott RN, assesses our supplies daily and continues to order and receive supplies from the Office of Emergency Management. Currently, staff are issued one mask daily and required to wear it in all areas of the Jewish Home except offices.

Do surgical face masks really work?

The Covid-19 virus is believed to be transmitted via droplets, similar to the flu and the common cold. A surgical face mask captures and traps droplets. When travelling in patient/resident areas, and caring for patients/residents without a suspected or known Covid infection, the surgical face mask is thought to be adequate protection. When providing care for patients/residents with a known or suspected Covid infection, or working in an area where Covid patients are cohorted, full PPE must be worn in conjunction with the surgical face mask for maximum effectiveness.

What about the N-95 masks? They're supposed to offer more protection.

As you know, there is a shortage of N-95 masks worldwide. The N-95 mask is utilized for health care workers that are most at risk, including those caring for patients cohorted on Covid units. N-95 masks are also utilized for patients with suspected/known Covid infection that receive "aerosol generating procedures (AGP)" such as nebulizer treatments. The Jewish Home has a limited supply of N-95 masks which will be issued to staff caring for patients/residents in areas where potential/actual Covid residents are cohorted.

How long can an N-95 mask be used?

Conservation measures for the N-95 masks are similar to the surgical masks. Extended wear and reuse are permissible. Mask life is extended when worn with full PPE including use of a cleanable face shield.

All masks should be disposed of if they are contaminated with blood, respiratory, or nasal secretions.

Tips on Mask Use

- Make sure your mask fits snugly
- Do not pull your mask down to your neck or up to your forehead. This can contaminate the clean inner surface.
- Do not touch the “dirty” outside of your mask.
- If you need to store your mask, fold the “dirty” outside parts together so the “clean” inner surface is on the outside. Then put into a storage bag.
- Wash or use hand gel if you touch your mask, or after you fold it for storage.

