

Guidelines for Extended Use and Limited Reuse of Surgical Procedure Mask

Intended for health care workers at risk of exposure to infectious illness

- Definitions:
 - Limited re-use of facemasks is the practice of using the same facemask by one person for multiple encounters with different patients but removing it after each encounter. Care should be taken to ensure that the outer surfaces of the mask are not touched during care, and that the mask removal and replacement be done in a careful and deliberate manner.
 - The CDC recommends that a mask classified as disposable can be reused by the same worker as long as it remains functional and is used in accordance with the local infection control procedures. Surgical mask reuse is often referred to as “limited reuse”. Limited reuse has been recommended and widely used as an option for conserving masks during previous mask pathogen outbreaks and pandemics.

- Recommendations:
 - When caring for a patient in droplet-contact precautions, recommend use of a cleanable face shield over a surgical mask to reduce surface contamination.
 - Recommend using mask indefinitely as long as mask does not meet criteria for disposal (see below *When to discard your surgical mask*)
 - Not all facemasks can be re-used:
 - Masks that fasten via ties may not be able to be undone without tearing and should not be considered for re-use.
 - It is important to minimize unnecessary contact with the mask surface, strict adherence to hand hygiene practices, proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) donning and doffing technique, and regular visual inspection of the mask.
 - Remember, the most significant risk of contact transmission is from touching the surface of the contaminated mask. (Nurses touch their face and eyes ~25 times per shift).
 - **NOTE:** A mask should NEVER be pulled down to expose nose and/or mouth without being completely removed and properly stored.
 - Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the mask (if necessary for comfort or to maintain fit).
 - When practicing universal masking without other PPE (gown, gloves, eye protection), use a pair of clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning a previously worn surgical mask. *Discard gloves after the mask is donned and any adjustments are made to ensure the mask is sitting comfortably on your face.*
 - The surgical mask may be used to care for more than one patient, however, a mask should NOT be used to care for a suspected or confirmed COVID patient as well as a non-COVID patient. This is one reason cohorting of suspected or confirmed COVID patients is very important.

- When to discard your surgical mask:
 - Discard surgical mask contaminated with blood, mucus or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients.

- Extended use alone is unlikely to degrade mask protection. Recommend discarding any mask that lacks structural integrity, is obviously broken, damaged or becomes hard to breathe through.
- Storage of your surgical mask:
 - Pack or store mask between uses so that they do not become damaged or deformed.
 - Masks will be stored in a paper bag, clearly dated and labeled with user's name to reduce accidental use by another user.
 - Masks should be folded lengthwise (think hotdog) so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage.
 - Mask and bag are to be discarded after obviously structurally damaged, difficult to breathe through, or contaminated as above.