



FAQ: Easing COVID-19 Precautions

On April 13 we eased many of our COVID-19 precautions, mainly around masking and social distancing. The "Universal Mandatory Mask" policy has been retired. The new "[Masking Due to Respiratory Symptoms and Illnesses](#)," policy reflect these changes.

I am providing direct patient care, am I required to wear a mask?

No. Masks are no longer required for team members, patients, or visitors except in inpatient areas where we are caring for severely immunocompromised patients such as oncology, transplant, neonatal intensive care units, and special care nurseries and in the outpatient setting in the dialysis and infusion centers. However, should a patient ask you to wear a mask while administering care, we'd ask you please honor their request.

If I am walking to my unit/department, do I need to wear a mask?

No, you do not need to wear a mask when walking through the hallways or clinical areas.

Are we required to wear masks while working at lobby or clinic front desks?

No, you are not required to wear a mask.

I'm coming back to work after having COVID – do I need to wear a mask?

Team members who are cleared to return to work after having COVID-19 must wear a mask for 5 days in all areas where other people are, including non-patient care areas. Masks may be removed if alone in a work area but must be donned as soon as other people are in the vicinity.

I feel safer wearing a mask. Will Henry Ford Health continue to supply masks?

Yes, masks will still be available for team members, patients and visitors who wish to wear one.

Are patients required to wear a mask?

Patients are not required to wear a mask unless they have new cold-like or COVID-19 symptoms.

What if a patient asks me to wear a mask?

We recognize some patients may feel safer if masks are worn. Please be gracious and put a mask on if a patient requests it while you are administering direct care. In these situations, nursing can post the "[Masks Required Sign](#)" as a courtesy to the patient so they do not need to continually ask.

My patient or a visitor has asthma/COPD. Would they be required to wear a mask?

A mask would not be required for a chronic condition, such as asthma or COPD. However, if the patient is exhibiting new cold/COVID-19-like symptoms, we would ask those patients to wear masks if they are able to medically tolerate them.

What patients are considered immunocompromised?

Patients who are being cared for in our neonatal intensive care unit and special care nursery, transplant unit/department, oncology units/department or who are [severely immunosuppressed](#).

If I work in an immunocompromised unit, or I choose to wear a mask, how long

should I wear my mask?

You should continue to wear your mask between patients until the mask becomes wet/torn/soiled. Once you remove your mask, do not save it. Discard the mask in the trash and perform hand hygiene. Masks must also be discarded once exiting an isolation room.

What about severely immunocompromised patients that may not be in our neonatal intensive care unit and special care nursery, transplant unit/department, oncology units/department?

Healthcare workers should continue wearing masks when interacting with patients who meet the definition of [severely immunosuppressed](#). Patients who are neutropenic should be placed in Neutropenic Precautions.

What about ancillary staff, should they mask if in a patient's room?

Yes, if the patient is in the neonatal intensive care unit or special care nursery, transplant unit/department, oncology units/department or is determined to be [severely immunosuppressed](#), then ancillary staff should be masked as well.

What about severely immunocompromised patients in outpatient clinics?

We recommend that severely immunocompromised patients wear a mask in outpatient clinics for their own protection. While COVID cases are decreasing, immunocompromised patients are at increased risk for severe disease from respiratory viruses.

What about masking in infusion and dialysis centers?

If the patient is known to be [severely immunosuppressed](#) the patient should wear a mask and the health care team providing direct care should be masked as well.

What if patients in an infusion or dialysis center are in close proximity to one another?

If patients cannot be spaced greater than 4-6 feet apart from each other or don't have a privacy curtain drawn between them, then each patient should be masked.

What about waiting areas in the infusion or dialysis centers?

If the patient in the waiting area is known to be [severely immunosuppressed](#), then they should wear a mask while waiting, and while receiving treatment. If the patient is unable to tolerate a mask, then continue to ensure staff providing care for the patient is masked and if possible, provide 4-6 feet of separation between that patient and a neighboring patient. Draw a privacy curtain between patients if one exists.

Do I need to remove chairs from my waiting room?

Not necessarily. If someone is [severely immunosuppressed](#) and can't tolerate wearing a mask while in a waiting room, then it's advised that they stay 4-6 feet away from others if at all possible. If your area encounters this situation frequently, then you may find it easier to promote social distancing (separation of 4-6 ft) with fewer chairs in the waiting area. That decision will be made by local leadership.

Will patient/visitor screening for COVID-19 be discontinued at entrances?

Active screening is no longer required. Signs will remain posted to remind patients and visitors that if they have COVID-like or cold-like symptoms, that they should wear a mask while in the facility.

Why are you removing the plexiglass from desks?

As we shift from a pandemic to endemic, and the virus is circulating at lower levels, there is no longer a need for barriers. Plexiglass removal will be managed by Facilities.

Do we need to continue to practice social distancing?

While we are not requiring social distancing, the practice of keeping 4-6 feet away from individuals not wearing a mask does help in reducing the spread of diseases through respiratory droplets. This is also known as physical distancing. Do wear a mask and stay

away from others if you are sick with cold- like or COVID-19 symptoms (cough, runny nose, sneezing, stuffy nose).

If I see a sign that states “masking required,” should I take it down?

No, please leave all signs up. This is because removing the signs may damage walls/surfaces. Facilities will be responsible for removing the signs. If you find a sign that you believe may have been “forgotten” or “missed,” please notify your local Facilities department.

Are we allowed to use the drinking fountains again?

Facilities is in the process of opening the drinking fountains. Once facilities have completed the process, drinking fountains will be operational again.

Are we permitted to have catering, “potlucks,” festivities like we did before the pandemic?

Yes, catering and potlucks are permitted now.

Can food and beverages be brought back to waiting rooms?

Yes, you can provide food and beverage in waiting rooms as appropriate.

Can we bring books, magazines, pamphlets, and toys back to waiting rooms?

Yes, books, magazines, and pamphlets are fine to bring back into waiting rooms. If toys are desired, they must be cleanable and have a well-defined process for cleaning after use.

Should I continue disinfecting rooms in between outpatient visits?

Yes, cleaning and disinfection should always occur between patient visits. Similarly, cleaning and disinfection of patient care equipment must continue between patient use. This is irrespective of COVID-19 levels and is outlined in policies: [Tier 1: HFHS Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization of Patient Care Equipment](#), [Tier 1: Housekeeping](#), and [Tier 1: HFHS Standard Precautions](#).

If I have new cold/COVID-19-like symptoms, do I continue to follow the same process with Employee Health Services?

Yes, continue using the Henry Ford Health Employee COVID-19 Screening App, as in the past. Alternatively, if you don't have access to the mobile application, you can call Employee Health Services directly.

FAQs will be updated as appropriate. Last update: April 26, 2023