

## Universal Masking Policy Statement – UPDATED 28 April 2020

The goal of our universal masking policy is to limit transmission of COVID-19 from asymptomatic and minimally symptomatic employees, health care workers, patients, and visitors. Universal masking, strict adherence to hand hygiene, and physical distancing are keys to prevent transmission.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and The Joint Commission recommend that health care facilities implement source control for everyone entering their facilities including health care personnel, non-medical employees, patients, and visitors. Source control involves having people wear a cloth face covering or facemask over their mouth and nose to contain their respiratory secretions and thus reduce the dispersion of droplets from infected individuals. This will decrease the possibility that anyone with an unrecognized COVID-19 infection will expose others. For source control to be effective, it requires that everyone wear a mask within health care buildings to prevent droplet and (to a lesser degree) aerosol spread of respiratory viruses such as COVID-19.

### Mandatory Guidelines for all UAB Medicine Employees, Patients, and Visitors:

- **All health care employees** should don the appropriate PPE for the level of precaution assigned to patients under their care (i.e Standard Precautions, Droplet Precautions, Airborne Precautions, Respiratory Enhanced Precautions) or in the ambulatory setting determined by a patient's respiratory symptoms. Please see the [Universal Masking Chart](#) for detailed guidance of appropriate PPE in each situation. Employees should continue to practice PPE conservation methods or mask reprocessing procedures designated for their units.
- **All employees in non-patient care areas** must wear a mask when in public areas and maintain social distancing requirements. Employees will be provided with an alternative mask, or they can wear a mask brought from home that is either cloth or commercially manufactured. To help us conserve our PPE, employees may wear UAB-provided alternative masks for multiple days until soiled. If employees wear a cloth mask, it must be washed and dried daily.
- **Patients in all settings** should wear a mask when possible while care providers are in the room and any time during transport for treatment, to decrease the risk of exposure to health care workers. Patients should arrive at our facilities with a clean facemask or face covering. If they don't arrive with a mask, one will be provided as long as supplies are available. Due to limited supplies, patients are encouraged to bring their own facemask or face covering from home. Should a patient's personal mask become soiled while hospitalized, they can be provided an alternative mask as supplies allow, until their mask can be appropriately cleaned and dried.
- **Patients with COVID-19** should receive a procedural mask once diagnosed and wear that mask when possible while care providers are in the room and any time during transport for treatment.
- **Visitors** should arrive at our facilities with a clean facemask or face covering. If they don't arrive with a mask, one will be provided as long as supplies are available. Due to limited supplies, visitors are encouraged to bring their own facemask or face covering from home.

### Additional Guidance:

- As we move to these expanded options, we must emphasize the importance of consistent hand hygiene.
- It is important to remove and save the masks in a way that prevents self-contamination. You should avoid touching the front of the mask and wash your hands after you remove or handle it. An acceptable way to store your mask is to place it in a paper bag.
- Employees may remove masks when social distancing of at least 6 feet is possible (i.e. after entering a private office). In order to allow staff to take off their masks for meals and breaks, scheduling and locations for meals and breaks should ensure the at least 6 feet of distance can be maintained between staff.
- If the supply of masks prohibits this strategy, distribution of masks will be prioritized based on clinical activities that carry the highest risk. All efforts to conserve our supply are necessary to make masks available to all employees. We continue to reach out to multiple manufacturers to increase our inventory of face masks.