

March 26, 2020

New Universal Facemask Guideline for Rush Employees

Currently, there is widespread community transmission of COVID-19 in our area.

To best protect our staff, we now are asking **all employees to wear facemasks – surgical or procedural masks – at all times starting Friday, March 27**. Please note – if you work in a non-patient care area and can consistently maintain a 6-foot distance from your colleagues, you do not need to wear a mask.

Why is this necessary? The universal facemask approach will serve to protect staff. This is particularly important now, as we are in the community spread phase of this pandemic in our region; community spread means that the spread of an illness has become so broad that the source of infection is unknown.

Our Extended Use of PPE

In order to support the new policy and be thoughtful about our supplies for the long-term, we ask that you are mindful of the number of facemasks you use during each shift when possible. **Please only replace your facemask when it becomes visibly soiled or damaged.**

To be successful, this new approach will require support from all of us and requires the following:

- Meticulous adherence to hand hygiene
- Strict adherence to extended use of facemasks (see guidelines about [PPE extended use](#))
- Proper mask use and hygiene, including wearing the mask as directed to cover the mouth and nose AND strict avoidance of touching the mask to reduce the risk of self-contamination

Storage of PPE will be in a centralized location. If you are unit or department based, please check with the leadership in the area about where to access masks. If you are a consultant or rounding in an area, please check with the unit leader/charge nurse.

Any changes like this one have been carefully considered and analyzed with staff safety as our top priority. We are reviewing all available data and evidence to guide our infection control decisions. We are considering best practices from other organizations in our area and nationwide, as well as the recommendations from our staff.

Thank you for your efforts.