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UNIVERSAL MASK POLICY

Summary of May 08, 2020 changes:

- Addition of instructions regarding patient masking
- Addition of eye protection for healthcare workers if patient is not wearing surgical or procedural mask

Background
Use of facemasks may reduce the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and is recommended by the CDC and MDPH. Partners employees working in clinical facilities have been mandated to wear masks since March 25, 2020. On April 6, 2020, the universal mask policy was extended to all patients and visitors. On April 16, 2020, the universal mask policy was extended to all employees in non-clinical locations.

The goal of instituting universal mask is two-fold: 1) to protect patients and other staff members should the healthcare worker have asymptomatic infection or develop symptoms at work (a mask decreases the risk of spreading infection) and 2) to protect our healthcare workers should they come in close contact with an individual with either asymptomatic infection or who has symptoms that have not yet been recognized.

Guidance
1. Partners patients:
   a. All patients will be provided a surgical or procedural mask to be used for the duration of their visit as long as not soiled or damaged. A replacement mask will be provided if the mask becomes soiled or damaged.
   b. For inpatients, the mask must be worn anytime the patient is outside their room (i.e., during transport). For outpatients, the mask will be worn throughout their visit to the Partners facility except when removal is necessary for clinical care.
   c. If the patient’s mask needs to be removed for any reason (e.g., physical exam, patient unable to tolerate), the employee will use eye protection in addition to a mask per Universal Mask Policy when in direct face-to-face contact. Eye protection will be used per Extended Use and Reuse of Personal Protective Equipment. Other PPE may be appropriate per Standard and Transmission-based precautions.

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2. Partners employees:
   a. The Universal Mask Policy applies to all Partners employees working at any Partners location including clinical, administrative, and research locations.
   b. One surgical or procedural face mask will be issued at the start of each shift and will be used throughout the shift. The mask will be discarded and replaced if it becomes visibly soiled or damaged.
   c. Employees must wear the mask over the mouth and nose.
   d. Masks must be worn at all times on Partners’ premises except when working in private individual offices or in areas where employees are reliably separated by more than 6 feet from others. When walking through common areas, however, masks must be worn.
   e. Employees should practice principles of social distancing, respiratory etiquette, and frequent hand hygiene.
   f. Eating is not permitted in clinical areas. If employees are working in a clinical setting, they follow the mask removal and reuse instructions as is outlined in Extended Use and Reuse of Personal Protective Equipment.
   g. Drinking is permitted in designated locations in clinical areas. If employees need to drink, they will ensure that they are 6 feet away from others, perform hand hygiene, remove the mask, drink, and then replace the face mask and perform hand hygiene again.
   h. To limit the number of people in a break room, staff must stagger break times.
   i. In nonclinical settings, where eating and drinking is not restricted, employees will take the following steps to remove the mask:
      a. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
      b. Remove the face mask and place it on a clean surface such as a paper towel, paper bag or paper tray
      c. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before eating
      d. After finishing eating or drinking, replace the mask taking care to avoid touching face or eyes
      e. Perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub
   j. Every effort should be made to limit exit and entry to the facility during each shift to preserve supplies of face masks. Employees using the mask in exclusively non-clinical settings can store the mask and reuse it upon re-entry; employees working in clinical areas should discard the mask upon exit and obtain a new one upon re-entry.
   k. Masks must be used according to Extended Use and Reuse of Personal Protective Equipment, which ensures careful and deliberate handling of the mask to prevent both self-contamination and cross-contamination.

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In the event the supply of surgical masks prohibits this strategy, distribution of masks will be prioritized based on the highest risk clinical activities. All efforts to conserve our mask supply are necessary to ensure masks are always available to all healthcare workers.