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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.

The goal of instituting universal mask at the time was 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. On April 6, 2020, the universal mask policy was extended to all patients and visitors.

Guidance
1. The Universal Mask Policy applies to all Partners employees working at any Partners location including clinical, administrative, and research locations.
2. 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.
3. Employees must wear the mask over the mouth and nose.
4. 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.
5. Employees should practice principles of social distancing, respiratory etiquette, and frequent hand hygiene.
6. 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 Partners Infection Control Guidance on Extended Use and Reuse.
7. 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.

8. To limit the number of people in a break room, staff must stagger break times.

9. 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

10. 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.

11. Masks must be used according to Partners policy on Extended Use and Reuse, which ensures careful and deliberate handling of the mask to prevent both self-contamination and cross-contamination.

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.

This policy or guidance document was developed based on currently available published guidance, in the setting of available supplies and clinical situations at our institutions. Decisions are made collaboratively and are based on ongoing risk-assessments of the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. This policy or guidance document represents the best recommendations as of April 16, 2020, will be reviewed regularly, and is subject to change as the situation evolves.