

**Date:** Friday, March 27, 2020

**To:** Everyone at HHS

**From:** Kirsten Krull, VP, Quality & Performance, Chief Nursing Executive

**Subject:** **Extended use of Personal Protective Equipment in emergency departments**

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## Universal masking in emergency departments

HHS is adopting a phased approach to the use of protective masks throughout hospital facilities. This is based on the evolving level of risk posed in different clinical settings as the prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the community evolves.

## What's guiding our approach

The approach to our masking policy is based on the patient population and specific risk to those areas of the hospital. Our first principle is always the safety of our staff and physicians. We are also acting responsibly in the face of a global supply shortage to allocate masks and other PPE according to risk, as a means to maintaining a sustainable level of PPE in the short- and long-term stages of the pandemic.

## What's happening now

Earlier this week, HHS moved to an extended PPE protocol in emergency departments as the first step in our phased approach. The rationale is based on:

- High acuity and high risk situations where patient status is unknown;
- Existing high use of PPE due to large number of patients in additional precautions.
- Opportunities to reduce PPE usage by extending the use particularly of masks and respirators in this specific area of the hospital to preserve supplies.

## What this mean for ED staff

- Staff should be keeping their first surgical mask on until grossly soiled or wet, or until a N95 respirator is needed for an aerosol generating procedure (e.g. intubation).
- After the procedure, the N95 will be kept on until grossly soiled.
- At this time, re-use of masks or N95 respirators, e.g. donning and doffing after a break, is not recommended in this setting.

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## What happens next

As the level of risk increases in other areas of the hospital, we will reassess and extend this protocol as needed. More information will be available soon on the extended use of PPE in ICU areas.

More information about PPE requirement and use is [available here](#).

I thank everyone for their collaboration.

Kirsten