

COVID-19 Update

Date: Monday, May 4, 2020
To: Everyone at HHS
From: HHS PPE Task Force
Subject: **Universal Masking: Level 1 Masks At All Staff Entrances**

Key Messages

- Masks distributed at staff entrances are Level 1 rated and meet all the appropriate standards for a Level 1 mask.
- Due to global demand for PPE, all hospitals are receiving products from different suppliers to secure enough stock to keep staff, physicians and patients safe.
- This means a variety of PPE is now in circulation and may not be the brands you prefer or are used to seeing on units.
- Do not discard masks provided at the entrance, just to replace it with another Level 1 mask on the unit. This is wasteful and will negatively impact our precarious PPE supply.

Exception

If you are required to don a higher level mask based on your area of work or based on a Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA) in daily work flow, you can reuse the Level 1 mask issued at the entrance by placing it in a plastic container, and wear it when exiting the site at the end of your shift. Of course, if the mask becomes soiled, ask your supervisor for another mask.

Otherwise, the Level 1 mask issued at the staff entrance should be worn throughout the shift using extended use and reuse principles.

How we ensure standards are met

Product packaging is not always clear as to how a mask has rated against the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards or an equivalent international standard.

Before distributing for use, every product is examined to ensure safety based on:

- Appropriate international standards for surgical masks that have equivalent requirements for fluid resistance and filtration efficiency (as reviewed and approved by the HHS Subject Matter Expert (SME) committee)
- A review of certifications and/or mask testing reports provided from the manufacturer that demonstrate mask performance to ASTM or equivalent international standards
- Verification and reviews of product when received into the hospital to confirm consistency with the manufacturer and supplier provided information
- Engagement of external independent lab testing for any products where we have determined that additional validation of the mask performance is required

To provide clarity for our teams and consistency on what to look for, an HHS label is placed on the boxes indicating the ASTM equivalence level of a mask. This is an assurance that all of the above steps for due diligence have occurred and that the mask is appropriate for use as indicated on the HHS label.

Thank you for your efforts to conserve PPE and keep each other safe.

More on universal masking can be found [here](#).