

Answering your questions about new masking requirements

[New masking requirements](#) went into effect at Ohio and Florida locations Wednesday, July 22, to provide additional layers of protection for our patients, visitors and caregivers and help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The FAQs below address many of your common questions about masking.

1. Why are we changing masking requirements?

We are changing masking requirements to help keep patients, visitors and caregivers safe. We evaluate our processes as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve. Due to the rising cases of COVID-19 throughout the country, as well as the approaching influenza and respiratory season, it is important to take further precautions. Surgical and ear loop masks provide an additional layer of protection from inhaling respiratory droplets, which is particularly important in a healthcare setting.

Cloth masks are still a key way to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Some people with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms, and may be spreading the virus unknowingly. A cloth mask can help individuals cover a cough or sneeze, reducing the spread of germs.

2. What type of mask are we providing to caregivers? What is the purpose of this mask?

We are now providing ear loop masks (pictured) to all caregivers, rather than cloth masks.

The ear loop masks we are providing to caregivers are a surgical grade 1-2 mask. These are FDA-approved masks meant to prevent droplets from reaching your mouth or nose.



3. Is the ear loop mask provided to caregivers effective?

The ear loop masks we are providing to caregivers are FDA-approved masks used to prevent droplets from reaching your mouth or nose. Compared to cloth masks, these filtered ear loop masks provide greater protection from inhaling respiratory droplets.

The ear loop masks being provided are approved for use in isolation precaution settings and are **not** approved for use in sterile procedural and surgical settings.

4. Where should caregivers obtain an ear loop mask?

Ear loop masks are available at screening locations and unit supply rooms.

5. How do non-patient care facilities/locations without screening stations obtain the masks and order them for their teams?

Mask orders for administrative locations are currently being collected. If you do not have masks available at your location, please speak with your department or site manager.

6. If I arrive to my building/screening location in a cloth mask, when and where should I switch to an ear loop mask?

Caregivers should continue to wear a mask on campus when coming to and from work (e.g., walking between your parking garage and building). Please use your best judgment if swapping between cloth and ear loop masks when you arrive to the workplace. To avoid creating a backlog at screening points, the swap between masks does not need to occur immediately upon entry, but should occur before entering clinical areas. We ask that you change masks in a socially distanced manner. Wash or sanitize your hands before removing your cloth mask and after folding and storing your cloth mask in a safe place (e.g. pocket, purse).

7. Are all caregivers expected to wear ear loop masks instead of cloth masks?

The safety of our caregivers — in all locations and settings — is our top priority. We are requiring all caregivers, even those working in administrative settings, to wear ear loop masks instead of cloth masks while inside our facilities.

8. How often are caregivers supplied an ear loop mask?

Each day, caregivers are provided one ear loop mask at a screening location or unit supply. Surgical or ear loop masks are also provided as needed, if a caregiver's mask becomes soiled, damaged, or after use in an isolation room (Contact/Droplet +Eyewear).

9. Are the ear loop masks provided to caregivers single use or reusable?

Caregivers should wear an ear loop mask throughout their shift, and only change masks when indicated (e.g., when a mask is soiled, damaged or after use in an isolation room).

10. If I arrive with a surgical or ear loop mask, will one be given to me?

If you arrive to your shift with a surgical or ear loop mask, you do not need to take a new one. However, if your surgical or ear loop mask is soiled, dirty or damaged, please take a new mask upon arrival at your shift.

11. How should I properly wear a surgical or ear lop mask?

Wear surgical or ear loop masks with the colored side always facing out, and the white side touching your face. It is not recommended to wear a cloth mask over a surgical or ear loop mask.

12. How should I properly dispose of a used ear loop mask?

At the end of your shift, please dispose of your mask in the garbage on your way out, handling by the ear loop. Wash or sanitize your hands, then put on your cloth mask.

13. Do we have enough supply to provide ear loop masks to all caregivers, in addition to patients and visitors who arrive without a mask?

Yes, we have an adequate supply of ear loop masks.

14. Are cloth masks still acceptable to wear in public settings, outside of work? If so, why?

Yes, cloth masks are an important way to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in community settings. Some people with COVID-19 have mild or no symptoms, and may be spreading the virus

unknowingly. A cloth mask can help individuals cover a cough or sneeze, reducing the spread of germs.

15. How should I store the cloth mask I wear into work, before arriving to the screening location? Is it safe to wear that same cloth mask when I leave work at the end of my shift?

Cloth masks should be stored in a manner that avoids contamination of the inside part of the mask that touches your face.

Caregivers should continue to wear a mask when walking between buildings and to/from parking lots. Cloth masks are acceptable in this situation, as are surgical or ear loop mask.

16. Who should I contact with specific questions about masking requirements?

Speak with your manager for more information or contact [your local Infection Preventionist](#). Questions may be emailed to Infection_Prevention@ccf.org. You can also refer to the [PPE Recommendations within the COVID-19 toolkit](#) for current information.

17. Are there any medical conditions (e.g. dermatitis) that exempt caregivers from wearing an ear loop mask? If so, how can those caregivers apply for an exemption?

Caregivers who have a medical condition that requires an accommodation from wearing a mask in the workplace must submit their request and supporting medical documentation to covid19@ccf.org.