

VUMC Employee Guidance for Utilization of Fabric Facemasks

April 1, 2020

Some of our faculty and staff have asked about wearing a mask while on the VUMC campus. Reasons for this range from concerns about possible spread without symptoms and self-protection. The risk of spread of SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 without symptoms is felt to be a rare means of spread, and more often spread may be occurring with the initial onset of respiratory symptoms (e.g. runny nose → person touches face → person then can contaminate surfaces).

Currently, no health authority recommends universal masking in healthcare facilities to prevent COVID-19 spread. (Although, this may prevent a person from subconsciously touching their face.)

As such, VUMC employees may wear fabric facemasks under the following rules:

- *Important Infection Prevention Note:* Fabric facemasks are **not** considered personal protective equipment (PPE). **They should not be used where entering the room of a patient on droplet precautions, including those with known or suspected COVID-19. Remove the cloth facemask and don appropriate PPE in these cases.**
- Fabric facemasks should be made of new, tight-weave cotton fabric (i.e. quilting cotton, denim, duck cloth, canvas, or twill).
- If an employee chooses to wear a fabric facemask, the facemask **should be worn at all times (except when entering isolation rooms, as noted above).**
 - **Facemasks should be worn over the mouth and nose and should not be worn dangling around the neck or on the chin/forehead.**
 - Employees should not touch or adjust their facemask. If they do, they must immediately perform hand hygiene.
 - When removing the mask immediately perform hand hygiene
- Fabric facemasks should be laundered in hot water daily.
- When not in use, fabric facemasks should be stored in a clean, closed paper bag or breathable container.

To obtain a fabric mask: Please contact 615-343-5453. All fabric masks are being donated and distributed by Supply Chain.