



## GUIDE FOR RETURNING TO IN-PERSON RESEARCH PHASE 1: PPE/FACEMASK/FACE COVERING USE



### INTRODUCTION

The health and safety of every UW community member is our top priority. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve and new information becomes available, we have carefully considered strategies to ensure the safety of our research workforce. We have heard your concerns and want our workforce to feel safe and confident as they continue to respond to this pandemic. This Guide provides you with information and guidance on the usage of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)/Facemasks to allow a safe return to in-person research at the UW. You may also wish to read this important guidance from EH&S: [EH&S Guidance: COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) and [EH&S Guidance on Facemask Use for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 for more information](#).



### WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

On May 11, King County released new guidelines strongly recommended that face coverings be worn in common areas (e.g. corridors, restrooms, stairwells, elevators, breakrooms, common equipment areas). It is not as essential to wear a face covering in research facilities where density and the chance of being less than 6 feet apart is low, but it is still recommended. All researchers are asked to conserve PPE whenever possible. (Note that we are referring to surgical/medical/procedure masks as “masks” and cloth masks as “face coverings.”)

The University strongly urges the use of face coverings when on a UW campus and around other people. A face covering is not needed when you are outdoors (e.g., walking, exercising or gardening) as long as you are able to stay 6 feet away from people who do not live with you. Additionally, some people may not be able to wear a face covering due to personal medical or physical conditions.

The Office of Research and EH&S are collaborating to provide guidance and information as available.

### WEARING A MASK MAY HELP PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Although keeping a distance (at least six feet) from other people is our best protection against COVID-19, wearing a mask can add another layer of protection. Masks can help protect others by containing respiratory droplets when the mask wearer coughs, sneezes or speaks. The [CDC has advised](#) that wearing cloth masks may be a valuable tool for reducing infection rates in public places.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SURGICAL/MEDICAL/PROCEDURE MASK AND A CLOTH MASK/ FACE COVERING?

- **Surgical/medical/procedure masks are prioritized for healthcare providers** who are on the front lines working to protect us all. There are shortages of these masks and it's critically important that healthcare workers have the equipment they need to do their jobs.
  - Surgical/medical masks/procedure may be used by UW employees doing work to support critical operations that requires them to be on site but they may not be able to maintain a distance of at least six feet between themselves and others at all times.
  - UW Medicine employees can refer to the [UW Medicine Mask Policy](#).





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## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW? (CONT.)

- Non-surgical/medical/procedure mask use (e.g., cloth face covering) does not replace the need to follow guidance to stay home and limit our contact with others.
- Disposable surgical masks (not cloth masks or face coverings) should be worn in labs at biosafety level 2 and higher, patient care areas and clean rooms.



## WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

1. Observe current guidance for the use of face masks and/or face coverings.
2. On May 11, King County released new guidelines regarding face coverings. The UW has released [guidance](#) for the university, be sure to include this in your plans, including your on-site facilities.
3. If your in-person research plan allows you to always stay at least 6 feet away from others and your normal research protocol does not require a face mask, wearing a face covering in your research facility is recommended but not required. You can decide whether the extra possible protection makes sense for you. It is possible that in common areas of your research facility it may not always be possible to maintain 6-foot distance, and you should wear a face covering in those situations. Note that some units may be requiring face coverings, so be certain to check on your local requirements.
4. Learn how to properly [wear and clean your mask\(s\)](#).
5. Keep a distance of at least six feet from other people. This is our best protection against COVID-19; however, wearing a face covering can add another layer of protection for you and others. The University strongly urges the use of face coverings when on a UW campus and around other people.

***As a reminder, only employees determined to be critical and approved to work on-site are allowed to be working at a UW location at this time.***



## INTERNAL RESOURCES

- > [Novel coronavirus & COVID-19: facts and resources FAQ: "When should I wear a face covering"](#)
- > [Workplace COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- > [Guidance on Facemask Use for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- > [EHS Guidance: COVID-19 Risk Level and Selection of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- > [EHS Guidance on Facemask Use for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- > [UW School of Medicine Required and Extended-Use Masking Policy Statement for Staff, Faculty and Patients](#)
- > [Whole U downloadable instructions on how to sew a mask by hand](#)



## EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- > [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) \(instructions on making and wearing a homemade cloth face covering.\)](#)
- > [CDC Guidance: Decontamination and Reuse of Filtering Facepiece Respirators](#)
- > [Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19 \(CDC\)](#)
- > [Public Health - Seattle & King County has also issued a directive strongly encouraging the wearing of face coverings.](#)