

UMMH Mask Guidance for Patients and Visitors

Overview

Effective Wednesday April 29, 2020, all patients entering the UNM Hospitals and ambulatory clinics will be asked to wear a mask while in the facility. This will help to ensure the safety of all persons entering our institution.

Current data suggests that the novel corona virus SARS-CoV-2 – which causes COVID-19 infections – is transmitted through prolonged, close contact with an infected person. Respiratory droplets enter through the mucous membranes including eyes, nose, and mouth of an uninfected person and can cause COVID-19 infection. Covering our eyes, nose, and mouth with a mask can limit spread of infection, including from people who may not currently have symptoms of COVID-19 infection. This guidance aligns with the current CDC and New Mexico Governor’s recommendations that people wear face coverings when out in public, especially when socially distancing can be difficult. Furthermore, the CDC also recommends everyone wear a mask when entering a healthcare facility.

While masks help prevent transmission of virus, social distancing, avoiding touching your eyes/face/nose/mouth, and performing proper hand hygiene, cough etiquette, are all equally critical to prevent virus transmission.

Specific Mask Guidance

- All patients and visitors must wear a face mask upon entering UNMH facilities. Exceptions include:
 - Children under 2 years of age
 - People who can’t tolerate the mask due to problems breathing
 - Anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without help
- Cloth masks are acceptable for asymptomatic visitors and patients – those who don’t have cough or other symptoms of COVID-19 like shortness of breath, fever, shaking chills, chest pain, loss of sense of smell or taste, or new headaches.
- If visitors and patients do not have access to cloth masks, a mask will be provided to them upon entry to the building.
- Patients with symptoms concerning for COVID-19 or other respiratory infections, will be provided a hospital-issued procedure mask per our existing unit-specific PPE guidance. A procedure mask must be used instead of a cloth mask because these are more effective in limiting transmission.
 - Patients should wear their procedure mask when HCP are within 6 feet of the patient to limit spread of infection to HCP.
 - Additionally, patients must wear the mask when off inpatient units, outside of the clinic room and when still within the building, and during transport to another unit/department.
 - In rooms with multiple patients, patients should wear their mask as much as tolerated.
- If a visitor develops symptoms consistent with COVID-19 while at UNMH, then the person should be provided a hospital-issued procedure mask, instructions on how to seek further care, and escorted out of the unit/clinic.
- If the patient’s or visitor’s mask becomes soiled, saturated or damaged, a replacement face mask will be provided to them.
- Mask guidance
 - Masks should be worn throughout the hospital; however, they can be removed for eating or drinking.
 - Patients and visitors should be instructed that if they must touch or adjust their cloth face covering, they should perform hand hygiene immediately before and after.
- If there are anticipated shortages of procedure masks, procedure masks should be prioritized for HCP and then for patients with symptoms of COVID-19 (as supply allows).