

April 10: COVID-19 Clinical Update

Healthcare Provider Exposure Guidelines and PPE Updates

This daily communication is intended to facilitate the sharing of important clinical information during the COVID-19 healthcare crisis and to help respond to questions from physicians across Northwestern Medicine.

Chicago is predicted to see a surge in patients testing positive for COVID-19 in the coming weeks. Over the past two months, Northwestern Medicine has engaged in substantial preparation efforts to ensure the availability of testing supplies and personal protective equipment, to establish alternative sites of care, and to implement optimal workflows and telehealth resources.

We have secured sufficient masks, goggles and isolation gowns to protect our workforce. More than 4,400 physicians, providers and staff have enrolled in our labor pool, and we have activated a system-wide surge capacity plan to ensure we are ready to meet the anticipated needs of our patients and communities.

The most current information and resources regarding COVID-19 are available on [NM Interactive](#) (login required) and [Physician Forum](#) (no login required). Please continue to monitor them regularly. As new information becomes available, we will share it with you here, and on NMI and Physician Forum.

In today's issue, you will find general guidelines on healthcare provider exposure and updated information regarding the use of PPE.

NM HEALTHCARE PROVIDER EXPOSURE GUIDELINES

To help determine next steps if you have been exposed to COVID-19, Northwestern Medicine has created the following guide. Please keep in mind these are general guidelines. There is not one rule for everyone who falls into a certain category, and testing is dependent upon each individual situation. For more information about healthcare provider exposure, view the [COVID-19 Exposure Guide](#).

If you believe you have been exposed or are exhibiting symptoms, please call the COVID-19 Hotline at 312.47.COVID (312.472.6843).

If employee...	And has a confirmed exposure...	The COVID-19 Hotline at 312.47.COVID (312.472.6843) will provide direction in your specific case. Potential actions may be:
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Does not have symptoms	Will not be tested	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to self-monitor • Report any changes to manager and COVID-19 Hotline
Has symptoms	Should call COVID-19 Hotline to determine if testing is appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay home until symptoms improve • Must be fever free for 24 hours without assistance of fever-reducing medications before requesting a Return to Work clearance by calling the COVID-19 hotline.
Has symptoms	And has been tested for COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain home until called by Corporate Health with results • If employee does not receive a call within 72 hours, call the COVID-19 hotline

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT UPDATES

Over the past week, the NM PPE guidelines, documentation, videos and FAQs have been updated based on the latest evidence to ensure physician and staff safety. Please review the revised frequently asked questions below. To learn more and to view the most current videos, visit the [PPE Resources](#) page on Physician Forum.

Q: When should I wear a mask?

A: A mask should be worn at all times by physicians and staff when entering clinical buildings, including hospitals and ambulatory outpatient sites. This includes shared clinical areas, such as hallways or nursing stations, and when entering all patient rooms. A mask does not need to be worn in the following circumstances:

- Walking outside NM hospitals or clinical buildings
- Spaces where social distancing can be maintained, such as eating in a designated area or in a private office
- While working in non-clinical buildings

Q: What type of mask should I wear?

A: Physicians and staff should wear an NM-provided earloop or surgical tie mask at all times within an NM facility and clinical buildings. The use of an N95 respirator for designated patient care tasks will supersede the use of an earloop or surgical tie mask. See the N95 questions below and [NM PPE policy](#) on NMI (*login required*).

Q: Can I wear the same mask into multiple exam or patient rooms?

A: Yes, you may wear one mask continuously. Once in place, you should avoid touching the mask. Perform appropriate hand hygiene if you touch the mask.

Q: Should I use a mask in an isolation room?

A: A surgical tie or earloop mask should be worn for all patients on contact, droplet and standard precautions. Please reference the FAQs on airborne isolation/N95s below for additional guidance.

Q: When should I discard the mask?

A: The mask should be discarded if it is soiled, difficult to breathe in, too wet to wear comfortably, torn or otherwise damaged.

Q: When should I wear an N95 respirator?

A: If the patient is on airborne isolation or requires an aerosol-generating procedure, an N95 respirator or PAPR hood should be worn. Perform a seal check when donning or if the N95 seems loose. In dedicated COVID-19 intensive care units, staff may wear the N95 continuously for care of multiple patients. An N95 respirator does not need to be worn outside of these clinical circumstances.

Q. Should I cover the N95 respirator with a surgical mask?

A. No, there is no need to cover the N95 respirator. A face shield is preferred, as it provides eye protection and may reduce contamination of the respirator.

Q. Can I use the N95 respirator for multiple patients? When should I discard it?

A. You may continue to wear and re-use your N95 respirator when providing routine care in an ICU as long as it is not soiled, torn or difficult to breathe through. You should discard your N95 respirator in the following scenarios:

- After wearing it during an aerosolizing procedure
- When it becomes contaminated with blood, nasal or respiratory secretions or other bodily fluids
- If it fails the seal test, tears or breaks
- If it becomes hard to breathe through

Q: When should I wear a Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR) instead of an N95?

A: PAPRs are to be used by individuals when they are unable to wear an N95. PAPR use is limited to individuals who:

- Perform aerosolizing procedures such as: bronchoscopy, sputum induction, endotracheal intubation or extubation, open suctioning of airways, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, TEE, labor and delivery or autopsies
- Cannot properly wear an N95 mask due to facial reconstruction, extreme weight loss/gain, braces or dentures

Q: When should I wear a face shield?

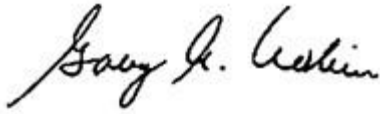
A: A face shield or goggles should be worn if the isolation sign indicates eye protection or whenever a body fluid splash is expected. A face shield may be preferred rather than goggles for visibility, comfort and ease of use. A full-face shield also provides some protection to the mask from contamination.

Q: How do I safely reuse a face shield or goggles?

A: Face shields and goggles can be safely reused as follows:

- A face shield or goggles may be worn throughout your shift between different patients. Take care not to touch your face shield or goggles. Appropriate hand hygiene must be performed if you do.
- Your face shield or goggles must be cleaned when visibly soiled and at the end of your shift.
- To clean your face shield or goggles: While wearing gloves, carefully wipe the inside, followed by the outside of the face shield or goggles using a hospital disinfectant wipe. Allow the item to fully dry, remove gloves and perform hand hygiene.

Thank you to all Northwestern Medicine healthcare providers on the front lines of this crisis for your continued dedication and collaboration in providing exceptional care to the patients and communities we serve. If you have any questions, or would like to share the story of an NM hero, please email us at COVID-19MD@nm.org.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gary A. Noskin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Gary" and last name "Noskin" clearly legible.

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Northwestern Memorial HealthCare
Chief Medical Officer
Northwestern Memorial Hospital