

COVID-19 Update

January 20: Updates to CDC Public Masking Recommendations and NM Visitor Policies

Today's issue features information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the general public regarding the appropriate use of different types of masks depending on levels of protection needed. It also includes an update on inpatient and outpatient visitor policies at Northwestern Medicine.

CDC UPDATES PUBLIC MASKING RECOMMENDATIONS

On January 14, the CDC updated its masking guidelines for the general public to provide clarification regarding the types of masks and respirators that offer most protection from COVID-19. It also offers tips on wearing and purchasing masks, as well as mask use for children. Please review the **revised recommendations** to assist you in patient discussions.

Included in the revised recommendations are guidelines to help individuals determine what type of mask to use in various situations, depending on level of protection needed. Loosely woven cloth products provide the least protection; layered, finely woven products offer more protection; well-fitting disposable surgical masks and KN95s offer even more protection; and well-fitting NIOSH-approved respirators (including N95s) offer the most protection.

CDC suggests a respirator may be considered in the following situations:

- When caring for someone who is sick with COVID-19.
- If you are **at increased risk for severe illness, for example, if you are immunocompromised, an older adult or have certain underlying medical conditions.**
- When working at a job where you interact with large numbers of the public, especially when not everyone is consistently wearing a mask
- When riding on planes, buses, trains or other forms of public transportation, especially for a long period of time or when crowded.
- When physical distancing is not possible, or when you are in crowded public settings.
- If you are not **up to date on COVID-19 vaccinations.**

These updated CDC guidelines are intended for the general public, not healthcare personnel. For more information about PPE guidelines for physicians and clinicians, please visit the PPE Resources pages on **Physician Forum** and **NM Interactive** (login required).


VISITOR POLICY UPDATES

Effective January 17, visitors may be restricted at specific locations or on certain patient care units at NM hospitals, or asked to wait in a public lobby or in their car to help reduce congestion. Additionally, companions will not be allowed for outpatient visits, with some exceptions. Review the latest guidelines below:

- [Inpatient visitor guidelines](#)
- [Diagnostic and outpatient visitor policy](#)

Direct patients and visitors to [nm.org/visitors](https://www.nm.org/visitors) for the latest visitor policy information.

While the number of patients with COVID-19 are beginning to decline across the state and within our hospitals, it remains important to follow appropriate masking guidelines and maintaining proper safety precautions to keep our patients, colleagues and communities safe.



Gary A. Noskin, MD
Senior Vice President, Quality
Northwestern Memorial HealthCare
Chief Medical Officer
Northwestern Memorial Hospital