

Patient Mask Refusal

With the exception of inpatients who are in their hospital rooms, everyone is required to wear a mask while in our facilities. Staff are required to wear an NM-issued mask. Patients and visitors who arrive wearing their own mask will be asked to replace or cover it with an NM-issued mask.

If a patient is unable to wear a mask due to a self-identified disability or medical condition, please contact the department or physician's office with whom the patient has an appointment to discuss a reasonable accommodation. We cannot ask for proof of the disability or medical condition, but can confirm if accommodations will work for the patient.

Reasonable Accommodations

If patients are unable to wear a mask due to a disability or medical condition, please have a conversation with the patient and discuss possible reasonable accommodations, which may include:

- Schedule or convert the appointment to a telehealth visit, if appropriate. Please work with the department or physician's office on scheduling options.
- If an in-person appointment is identified as necessary, please follow the same workflows utilized for symptomatic patients:
 - Minimize duration and proximity of exposure by isolating the patient and maintaining physical distancing
 - Once in the clinic or department, expedite rooming, bypassing check-in
 - Clinical staff dons PPE (**mask and goggles or faceshield**) to assess patient

Personal or Other Refusal Reasons

If the patient refuses to wear a mask for reasons other than a medical condition or disability, make an attempt to explain that Northwestern Medicine is requiring universal masking for anyone within our facilities. This is following the guidelines of the CDC and for their protection as well as others within our buildings. If the patient still refuses and does not need an accommodation:

- Notify clinic/place of service. Clinician may wish to discuss with patient, and may elect to proceed with appointment, or may defer.
- Provide telehealth visit as another alternative.

Accompanying Visitors

As noted above, everyone is required to wear a mask while in Northwestern Medicine facilities. Visitors are not allowed to enter our facilities without a mask, with a few exceptions noted below.

- If a visitor is unable to comply with NM's universal masking protocol, they will be asked leave the premises.
- There are two situations in which we would allow an exception to this policy for visitors:
 - If a visitor is necessary to the patient's care but is unable to wear a mask due to a disability or medical condition, similar to the above, we should follow the same workflows utilized for symptomatic patients for the visitor and patient they are accompanying. In addition to the above options, we may also discuss the following with the visitor
 - Ask that the visitor wear a mask while in common areas and hallways, as a necessary safety requirement to protect our staff and patients, and allow them to take off the mask while in the room with the patient
 - Offer that the visitor can participate in the visit via a telehealth platform (phone or video) from home or another space, if it is not necessary for the visitor to be present in-person.
 - If the visitor is assisting a patient with a disability and wearing a mask would limit the visitor's ability to assist the patient with communication, the visitor may remove their mask. An example is, if the patient lip reads and relies on the companion to facilitate communication. The visitor's mask should be worn any time that assistance is not required. A [ClearMask](#) could also be

considered for the visitor.

Continue to use NMI for the most up to date COVID information.