Reusable Cloth Face Coverings for Patients & Visitors

Updated July 11, 2021

What's Changed: Updated to reflect OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS)

Background
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended universal source control be worn by all who enter a health care facility. Cloth face coverings are acceptable source control for patients and visitors when entering a ministry. Colleagues and clinicians are not permitted to use cloth face coverings to provide source control under the OSHA COVID-19 ETS that is now effective for health care facilities. Instead colleagues and clinicians must wear a disposable, medical grade facemask, e.g., procedural mask with ear loops, or other types of respiratory protection required as part of PPE during their provision of patient care. See also Reusable Cloth Face Coverings for Patients & Visitors.

FAQs Regarding Cloth Face Coverings
Q. Can you define an acceptable cloth face covering?
A. Acceptable cloth face coverings are made of two to three layers of tightly woven cotton fabric that fit closely to the face by covering the nose and mouth. Cloth face coverings do not offer the same protection as medical grade, disposable procedure or surgical masks and are not to be used by colleagues and clinicians at any time while in the ministry. The rationale is OSHA has determined cloth face coverings do not meet requirements in their PPE standard.

Q. A patient is about to enter our ministry and asks if the single layer chin-face gaiter is acceptable. Is it?
A. No, this type of cloth covering is not sufficient. The System guide, Reusable Cloth Face Coverings provides examples of which are and are not acceptable.

Q: If I am caring for COVID-19 patients, PUIs, and patients who are not suspect or confirmed, how would I manage the transition between a cloth face covering and the traditional disposable medical grade mask?
A: A facemask is required for all colleagues who enter our facilities. Use of cloth face coverings by colleagues in any areas of the ministry are not allowed. All colleagues are to follow the PPE guidance in the PPE Guidebook.

Q. Are patients or visitors wearing cloth face coverings permitted in well-defined areas under the OSHA ETS?
A. No. well-defined areas are spaces closed to the general public. Patients and visitors, even if wearing cloth face coverings are not permitted to be present.
Q: If I am already wearing a procedural mask, can I put a cloth face covering over it? Will it provide me with more protection?

A. No. Cloth masks are not to be worn by colleagues when in the ministry even if worn over a procedure facemask.

Q: I work in a non-patient care area. Can I wear a cloth face covering?

A. No. OSHA ETS does not permit health care personnel to wear cloth face coverings at any time during their work inside the ministry.

Q: I don't work in acute care, I work in a community-based primary care practice. Won't a cloth face covering do?

A. No. A facemask must be worn by health care personnel who work in any type of health care setting, e.g., primary care office, acute care facility or continuing care setting like skilled nursing facility or PACE location.