

# Continuing to Preserve Our Supply of Masks

February 20 2020, Thursday

Thank you to everyone who heeded our message last week about preserving our supplies of N95 respirators and medical/surgical masks. With your help, we have stabilized our supply of N95s, for now.

However, because the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in China has interrupted most of the global production and shipping of standard medical/surgical masks, we must take additional steps to preserve our supplies.

Therefore, we will no longer make these masks available at the main entrances of our hospitals. This step is in accordance with the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the New York State Department of Health, and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Masks will not be offered to visitors; employees who have not been vaccinated against influenza will need to obtain a mask from their department. Masks will be available at the entrances to emergency rooms and urgent care facilities under the supervision of security or triage personnel.

As a reminder, the use of standard medical/surgical face masks is typically indicated only in the following situations:

- Practitioners who are performing procedures that require antiseptic technique
- Practitioners who are caring for patients on droplet precautions or protective precautions
- Staff members who work in a health care setting who have not been vaccinated against influenza
- Patients who are exhibiting upper respiratory symptoms, such as cough and fever, who have not yet been placed in an isolation setting

The use of the medical/surgical face mask with an attached face shield is indicated in the following situations:

- Practitioners who are performing droplet-generating procedures, such as intubation, manual ventilation after intubation, obtaining specimens for respiratory infections (e.g., sputum induction, tracheal aspiration), tracheostomy insertion, and suctioning of the respiratory tract
- Practitioners who are involved in procedures such as surgery, GI endoscopy, and other interventions that may result in blood or body fluid exposure to the face

Thank you for your cooperation with these measures, which we hope will be temporary.

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