

Updated Guidance Around Universal Masking in Clinical Areas

VUMC is resuming standard infection prevention protocols, effective immediately. These changes reflect current available evidence on the prevention of COVID-19, including high levels of vaccine and infection-induced immunity and the availability of effective treatment and prevention tools:

Universal masking of patients, employees, and visitors is no longer required at VUMC including in clinical areas, non-clinical areas, and on shuttles. Individuals may still choose to wear a mask as an option, and we ask that all VUMC colleagues be respectful of this choice.

Masks should **still be worn** for specific indications such as the following:

- for isolation precautions when indicated (e.g. Droplet Precautions or when evaluating a patient with respiratory symptoms),
- for individuals following COVID-19 infection who are instructed to wear a mask for a specific duration after clearance to return to work by Occupational Health,
- for patients who present with symptoms of acute respiratory infection including COVID-19, and
- for employees who develop symptoms of acute respiratory infection at work until they are able to leave as per VUMC policy.

All VUMC colleagues should continue to follow basic essential infection prevention practices, including screening all patients for any signs or symptoms of acute respiratory infection (with isolation and testing of those who screen positive), use of hand hygiene, and strict adherence to recommended personal protective equipment and isolation practices, and should follow VUMC policy in regard to not working when ill.

NOTE: This guidance may change if a new SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern emerges or if other factors suggest an increased risk of spread of COVID-19 within our facilities.