



April 6, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

On April 3, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a voluntary [Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission](#). CDC "recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings **where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain** (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies) especially in areas of significant community-based transmission."

CDC emphasizes that the use of cloth face coverings complements existing guidelines and does NOT change the need to follow social distancing and hand-washing guidance. As such, the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) is adopting the CDC recommendation into its [COVID-19 Social Distancing Guidelines](#).

For situations where it is NOT feasible to maintain at least 6 feet of social distancing, cloth face coverings should be worn. Cloth face coverings are NOT intended to protect the individual wearing the cover and should not be considered personal protective equipment (PPE). Instead, cloth face coverings are intended to reduce the spread of the virus from people who may be carrying the virus but are not currently exhibiting symptoms. Therefore, cloth face coverings are intended ONLY to prevent a person carrying the disease from spreading the virus to other people when interacting in close proximity (e.g., speaking, coughing, or sneezing). The Pennsylvania Department of Health provides a summary of the difference between N95 respirators, surgical masks, and cloth face coverings in the following document: [Understanding the Difference: Homemade Masks](#).

UMB is working with vendors to acquire cloth face coverings. When available, UMB aims to strategically distribute two cloth face coverings to UMB essential personnel working on campus who work in areas where social distancing is impractical or where they have interactions with customers or members of the public. Providing these masks is intended to give essential employees an initial supply of masks - one to wear while a second one is being laundered. Employees are free to use their own personal cloth masks as well, and employees who are able to make or provide their own masks are encouraged to do so. Contractors working on campus should issue similar guidance about cloth face coverings to their employees when social distancing is not feasible, and contractors should make efforts to ensure employees have cloth face coverings or have the ability to make/obtain cloth face coverings.

UMB personnel can make their own cloth face coverings by following the directions of this CDC tutorial: [How to Make Your Own Face Covering](#).

At UMB, you should wear a cloth face covering when performing a non-health care activity for which social distancing cannot be maintained. Examples include:

- Work activities that require two or more people to complete for which they must come within 6 feet of contact to perform the task
- Interactions with customers in which social distancing is not feasible
- Using public transportation to get to work

When using a cloth face covering, you should follow these guidelines:

- Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water before putting on a cloth face covering.
- Ensure the cloth face covering fits snugly around your mouth and nose.
- Avoid touching the cloth face covering while using it; if you do touch it, wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Do not wear a cloth face covering when it is damp or when wet from spit or mucus.
- When removing the cloth face covering, remove it from behind, do not touch the front of the cloth face covering.
- Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after removing the cloth face covering.
- It is a good idea to wash your cloth face covering frequently, ideally at the end of each day. Put your cloth face coverings in a bag or a bin until they can be hand- or machine-washed with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle or hung to dry in a safe place. If you must re-wear your cloth face covering before washing, wash your hands immediately after putting it back on and avoid touching your face. Discard cloth face coverings that:
 - No longer cover the nose and mouth
 - Have stretched-out or damaged ties or straps
 - Cannot stay on the face
 - Have holes or tears in the fabric

CDC advises that surgical masks, N95s, and KN95s are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for health care workers and other medical first responders.

To comply with CDC recommendations and ensure that appropriate PPE is available to those who need it most, UMB will only provide surgical masks, N95s, or KN95s to health care workers or first responders. Limited exceptions may be made in cases where an identified high-probability hazard exists and the operation directly supports the continuity of health care, public safety, or essential research.

If your UMB duties require you to enter a University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS) facility, please be aware of UMMS' [new policy regarding face masks](#).

These guidelines will change as CDC and other officials update their recommendations.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
Interim President