



VA Boston Guidance on Acceptable Face Coverings

All staff, Veterans, and visitors at VA Boston medical centers and clinics are required to wear a medical face mask or cloth face mask on the grounds and in our facilities.

Medical concerns regarding masking must be discussed with your provider before your appointment. Admittance to the facility will be denied, without an approved mask.

The virus that causes Covid-19, is passed by breathing in viral particles and by touching surfaces contaminated with the virus. Coughing, sneezing, speaking, singing, and breathing releases droplets that contain viral into the air. Most droplets fall to the ground within a few feet, but some small droplets (aerosols) can linger in the air, making infection of others possible.

COVID-19 infection is related to the amount of virus exposed to and the duration of the exposure. Indoor spaces, with limited ventilation and air exchange, increase the risk of viral transmission.

We know that people who never develop symptoms and those in the pre-symptom phase (about 2 days before symptoms appear) can spread the virus into the air and spread infection.

Wearing an approved cloth or medical face mask over the nose, mouth and under the chin reduces the spread of infectious droplets into the air and reduces the risk of infection.

Frequent hand hygiene; washing and sanitizing, is critical to limiting the spread of COVID to surfaces.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Which cloth face coverings are not allowed in VA Boston facilities?

Single layer face coverings such as bandanas, and “neck gaiters” provide little if any filtration capability and are NOT allowed for use by anyone in VA Boston facilities.

Masks of any type with “valves” or “vents” that allow the virus to escape are NOT allowed for use in VA Boston facilities.

2. What face coverings should health care workers in clinical areas wear?

Employees working in clinical areas (e.g. inpatient, outpatient, procedure areas, etc.)



should wear, at minimum, a two-ply, non-surgical medical face mask approved by the

CDC. Employees working in clinical operating rooms should wear a medical face mask (or surgical or non-surgical N95 respirator if indicated) with a face shield.

Staff may wear a cloth face mask only in non-clinical areas.

3. Should the medical center distribute non-surgical medical masks to Veterans, visitors, and staff?

If Veterans, visitors, or staff do not have their own acceptable cloth face mask (i.e., at least two-ply cloth face mask consistent with current CDC recommendations) or a medical face mask, VA Boston will provide one.

Inpatients are encouraged to wear a non-surgical medical mask when interacting with other individuals and when they enter/leave their room. All Covid-19 positive patients or patients under observation for COVID must wear a non-surgical medical face mask when outside their room.

4. What is the proper way to wear and care for a cloth face mask or medical face mask?

For safety, cloth face masks and medical face masks must cover the nose, mouth, and chin. Cloth face masks should be laundered daily.

Medical face masks should not be laundered or used if they become wet, soiled, or lose their integrity. Individuals should not touch the front of their face masks and should remove them using the ear loops or ties. After removing a face mask, individuals should immediately perform hand hygiene. More guidance on how to wear a face covering can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html>