



*Update effective July 1, 2024*

## UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON FACE COVERING POLICY

### 1. POLICY

The University of Washington's (UW) Face Covering Policy is in alignment with federal, state, and local agencies, workplace safety requirements and public health guidance. This includes the [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries \(L&I\)](#) workplace health and safety requirements, and local public health agency guidance. This policy is in effect until otherwise modified or rescinded. Any changes to this policy are made in coordination with the UW Advisory Committee on Communicable Diseases (ACCD).

Additional information and resources are available on the [Face Covering Policy webpage](#) on the UW Environmental Health & Safety website.

*UW Medicine medical facility personnel follow UW Medicine face covering and personal protective equipment policies.*

As part of the University's multi-layered strategy to limit the transmission of respiratory illnesses, the **face covering requirements in UW healthcare facilities and clinical settings will align with those in place for UW Medicine medical facility personnel.**

The requirements are based on [respiratory virus transmission \(COVID-19, flu, and RSV\) metrics](#). Face covering requirements will change depending on these metrics, local public health guidance, and the current season. This may entail differing requirements and recommendations for personnel versus patients, visitors, and families, though all are strongly encouraged to wear a mask while in clinical spaces. EH&S will maintain the current UW Medicine face covering requirements on EH&S webpage, and individuals will follow the mask signs posted upon entry to clinics.

For the purposes of this policy, a face covering is a surgical mask: a loose-fitting, disposable device that creates a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and potential contaminants in the immediate environment. Surgical masks are regulated under the [Food and Drug Administration](#) to protect both the wearer and patients in a healthcare environment. Surgical masks are not to be shared. They may be labeled as surgical, isolation, dental, or medical procedure masks. A face covering that provides a higher level of protection, such as a KF94 mask, a KN95 mask, or an N95 respirator fulfills the requirements of this policy.

### 2. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to **all University personnel, students, contractors, vendors, tenants, customers and visitors** who are on site at a University healthcare or clinical location.

For the purposes of this policy, "University personnel" includes all employee groups described in UW Administrative Policy Statement 40.1, including, but not limited to:

- Faculty, librarians, postdoctoral scholars, and other academic personnel; students who work on site at a University healthcare or clinical work location; staff, including



contract-covered, classified non-union, temporary hourly, and professional staff; Hall Health physicians; and Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA) contract employees.

- Individuals who have a contingent worker or appointment relationship with UW, stipend recipients, and others who work on site at a University healthcare or clinical location but are not employees of the University.

### 3. EXEMPTIONS

**Where face coverings are required**, the following exemptions apply to this policy:

- a. Site-specific infection prevention requirements, including those mandating procedure/surgical masks or respirators would supersede this policy.
- b. Face coverings do not replace required job-specific personal protective equipment (PPE), such as respirators, specific medical/procedure masks, and face shields.
- c. Personal office/workspaces; working or spending time alone in a personal office or workspace with the door closed or open by a few inches to allow others to know if the room is occupied.
- d. When actively eating or drinking.
- e. When any party to a communication is deaf or hard of hearing and not wearing a face covering is essential to communication.
- f. When necessary to confirm the person's identity.
- g. When unable to put on a face covering due to an emergency.
- h. While showering, bathing, or engaging in other personal hygiene or grooming activities that require the removal of a face covering.
- i. Children younger than five years old; children who are younger than two years old should not wear a face covering due to the risk of suffocation. Children who are two, three, or four years old, with the assistance and close supervision of an adult are recommended to wear a face covering when around non-household members.
- j. Modifications to the application of this policy as approved by Environmental Health & Safety and the Executive Office for specialized operations or programs not covered by the listed exemptions.

### 4. UNIVERSITY UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

Units are required to provide all personnel working on site at a University healthcare and clinical work location with face coverings where they are required and/or job-required PPE and replace them when necessary. When not required, University units are required to make face coverings available.

University units must train personnel on the proper use, including replacement, care, storage and disposal of face coverings and PPE. This includes informing personnel of the location and process for obtaining face coverings within their workspaces or on campus. Units should refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance with



regard to [type and fit, wearing, and replacing face coverings](#).

Units must communicate and enforce applicable face covering requirements to all personnel working on site at a University work location.

The University of Washington is committed to maintaining a respectful, productive, inclusive, and equitable workplace, and discrimination and other conduct that is inconsistent with our values will not be tolerated.

## 5. POLICY ENFORCEMENT

### a. In the Workplace

Personnel are required to comply with this policy as a condition of employment, as well as for the health and safety of themselves, their colleagues, and the UW community. Units are required to ensure all of their personnel have a thorough understanding of the requirements outlined in this policy. If, after education and training, personnel refuse to comply, contact your division/college/school/campus's VP/dean/chancellor office or your unit's human resources/academic human resources (HR/AHR) representative to initiate the appropriate corrective action or standard of conduct process. If your dean/chancellor's office or unit's human resources representatives require assistance, they should contact their central HR consultant or Academic Human Resources business partner. If personnel state they are unable to wear a mask due to a health condition, refer the individual to the [formal accommodation request process](#).

University personnel with concerns that other personnel are not complying should speak with their supervisor or report it to [Environmental Health & Safety](#).

### b. Students

Students are required to follow the University's Face Covering Policy at all times when in healthcare and clinical spaces at the University, including any posted requirements in specific buildings or areas.

If a student refuses to comply with the policy, the student can be asked to leave University premises. [Student Conduct](#) offices are available for consultations on potential violations of student conduct if needed. University personnel with concerns that a student or group of students are not complying with this policy should speak with their supervisor, consult with the campus student conduct office, or [report it to Environmental Health & Safety](#). Students concerned about other students should contact their campus student conduct office.

### c. Members of the public, patients, customers, and visitors on campus

Members of the public, patients, customers, and visitors to the University are required to follow the University's Face Covering Policy; individuals must wear a face covering when entering a University healthcare or clinical facility or area that requires it in order to receive services in accordance with this policy. If a member of the public, customer, or visitor is not wearing a face covering in an area where it is required, the following steps are to be taken:



- Begin with a polite verbal request for compliance to educate and persuade the individual to wear a face covering. University personnel should ask the individual to wear a mask or face covering and have a supply of disposable facemasks to offer individuals who do not have one.
- If, following a polite verbal request, the individual continues to decline to wear a face covering or facemask, personnel should notify the site manager to assist the customer with determining if accommodations, such as curbside pickup, can be made.
- If the individual refuses to wear a face covering and does not indicate a medical condition or disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering, they should be politely informed that they are not permitted to enter and be asked to leave. Personnel should not attempt to physically block an individual or physically remove them from the space and should avoid confrontation but not provide service. Law enforcement (e.g., University of Washington Police Department or local law enforcement agency) may be called for help as a last resort.

## 6. ACCOMMODATION RESOURCES

Individuals who are required to wear a face covering and have the following medical conditions or health risks may request an accommodation: a mental health condition, a developmental or cognitive condition, or a disability that prevents them from wearing a face covering. This includes, but is not limited to, persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing, who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

For University personnel requesting a medical or health risk accommodation, determination of the accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis with the unit human resources representatives in coordination with the Disability Services Office (DSO), the unit, and Environmental Health & Safety. The [UWHR website](#) provides for more information about this process. Personnel will be required to provide documentation to substantiate their need for accommodation.

Students seeking accommodation should contact [Disability Resources for Students \(DRS\)](#) for determination of a medical or health risk. Accommodation will be made on a case-by-case basis through consultation with DRS.