

Move to Optional Masking

TYPE OF INFORMATION: Informational

INTENDED AUDIENCE: All Midwest Region Sites

Situation S	Midwest region Senior Executive Leadership and Infection Prevention support the removal of the universal masking mandate across our Illinois market (March 27 th) and WI market (April 17 th).
Background B	In 2020, severe COVID infections were widespread, there was insufficient testing, and no vaccinations or specific treatments were available. In response to these factors and the Federal Public Health Emergency, a universal masking protocol was implemented across our organization in an effort to prevent transmission of COVID by maximizing source control.
Assessment A	Favorable changes have occurred this year, including: • Ending of the Public Health Emergency • Evolution of COVID to an endemic state (similar to other respiratory viruses) • Low levels of COVID cases currently circulating in our communities and very few hospitalizations • Significantly reduced severity of disease • High levels of population immunity • Readily available vaccines
Recommendation R	Masking will be optional in our healthcare facilities; signage will be posted at common entrances and will provide the following guidance. Masking is optional, unless 1. <i>You have a fever, sore throat, runny nose, or cough</i> 2. <i>Patient condition requires masking (notice on unit or patient door to indicate if masking is required)</i> <u>Site Mitigation Measures in place:</u> • Respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene program in place. Signage and masks are available at entrances and on units. TM with respiratory illness are advised to not come to work. • Continue providing masks at all entrances and highly encourage use in congregate settings (e.g., behavioral health and inpatient rehab). • Continue required masking for visitors of patients in transmission-based isolation (e.g., droplet precautions) • To ensure our patients feel safe, we expect our physicians, nurses, and other clinical teammates to wear a mask at the patient's request during their care encounter. • Future masking guidelines may change based on regulatory guidance and/or the prevalence of respiratory illnesses in our communities. (Seasonal approach)
Questions? Please contact:	

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Originating Department: Infection Prevention & Midwest Region Senior Executive Leadership

Post Through Date: