

Use of Homemade Face Masks with Face Shields for Patient Care when Commercially-produced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is Unavailable

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The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve and there is now widespread community transmission across Iowa. There is a national shortage of PPE, and public and private officials are working to address national and global supply challenges. Due to the current limitations on supplies of face masks in particular, there may come a time during this response when commercially manufactured masks are no longer readily available. *If commercially-produced face masks are no longer available*, healthcare workers can use homemade cloth face masks during patient care activities. These homemade cloth face masks must be used in conjunction with a face shield that covers the entire front (extends to chin or below) and sides of the face. These homemade cloth face masks are not considered PPE since their ability to protect against COVID-19 has not yet been studied, however if they are the only protection available, they should be used. It is important that fit-tested N-95s or equivalent respirators still be used when performing aerosol-generating procedures.

Health care facilities who choose to receive local donations from Iowans should plan for a drop site and provide direction to volunteers that prevents entry into the health care facility.

Guidance for use of homemade masks:

- Each worker should be assigned multiple masks that are able to comfortably and securely fit their face.
- Masks should be changed ideally at the same frequency as disposable N95s. At a minimum masks should be changed when saturated due to condensation build up from breathing, or after a gross contamination event.
- Dirty masks and clean masks must be clearly identified.
- Both should be in sealed containers to prevent contamination.
- Before donning a mask, wash hands and put on clean gloves.
- Take clean mask out of container. Don by placing the exterior of the mask into your gloved hand. Place inside of mask over your face covering your nose and mouth. Secure top strap over crown of head, secure bottom strap behind head.
- Adjust fabric to close any gaps – pay attention to cheeks and sides of nose. Form the adjustable wire over the bridge of the nose if present.

Washing Masks:

- Wash masks before first use.
- Wash dirty masks between each use. Wash in hot water and use a disinfectant like bleach, dry completely on high heat to kill pathogens.
- Masks may need to be ironed after washing to ensure no rolls or gaps on sealing surface.

Face shields should always be used in conjunction with homemade face masks. Face shields must be used in direct patient care to cover the mask so the same mask can be used when providing care to multiple patients. Face shields can be cleaned and re-used by the same user, so please do not discard if it is still functional. Face shields can be worn through multiple patient interactions without cleaning, until visibility is impaired or a non-cleanable portion of the shield (e.g., foam head band) becomes visibly soiled.