COVID-19 PPE N95 Disinfection FAQ

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Spectrum Health contact: Cari Porter

Q. When will my “used” mask be picked up?
A. Pick-up times are 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., and your mask will be returned as soon as they are disinfected/processed.

Q. How long will it take to get my N95 mask returned to my unit?
A. Estimated turn-around time is 5 - 6 hours per unit.

Q. How many times will my N95 mask be disinfected?
A. Currently, we are estimating 5 disinfection cycles per mask.

Q. What if I cared for a TB or C. diff patient while wearing my N95 mask?
A. Not all our disinfection processes are rated for TB and C. diff. Please discard your N95 and follow unit protocol to obtain a new mask.

Q. Does writing on my N95 mask with a Sharpie compromise the integrity of the mask?
A. No. And it is necessary to use a Sharpie, not a pen or pencil, so information can be read after disinfection.

Q. Does the disinfection process occur 7 days a week?
A. Yes, it will run every day, including weekends.

Q. What if my mask is not returned—my bag is empty?
A. Your mask was not disinfected (e.g. met limit of disinfection cycles, straps broke).
You will receive a clean bag with your full name, location, unit and date along with a note stating your mask was not disinfected (re-processed). Please follow unit protocol to obtain a new mask.

Q. After disinfection, what if my mask no longer fits properly?
A. If your mask does not fit properly due to wear or processing, please follow unit protocol to obtain a new mask.

Q. What if I am unable to pull air through or complete a proper seal check?
A. Safety first! Please discard your mask and follow unit protocol to obtain a new mask.

Q. What if my mask or straps are torn or damaged?
A. Please place mask in a paper bag, marked—BROKEN MASK—and put in “Used” tote. Follow unit protocol to obtain a new mask.
Q. If I cannot drop off my mask at the end of my shift (e.g. work at different campuses), can I drop it off the next day for disinfection?
A. Yes. Leave your mask in the paper bag and drop it off, the next day, in the “used” tote in your area.

Q. Can I safely store my mask in a plastic container?
A. No. Plastic containers hold moisture. Please store only in a paper bag so your mask can dry out.

Q. What happens if I drop off my “used” mask on a unit and don’t return for days (if at all) to pick up my disinfected mask?
A. After a few days, it will be returned and stored in the Sterile Processing Department. Please help your colleagues and Spectrum Health by responsibly optimizing your N95 for safe reuse: drop off your used mask for disinfection and pick up, timely. Searching through a multitude of masks is causing frustration and resulting in requests for new N95s, unnecessarily.

Please refer to the Health Care Professionals Resources page for additional information.