USE AND CARE OF FACE MASKS

Face masks are physical barriers that can help contain the spread of respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks. By covering your mouth and nose with a mask, you are less likely to transmit the virus to others if you are asymptomatic or have unrecognized, early COVID-19 symptoms. A mask also prevents the wearer from touching their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Research shows that the use of masks reduces community transmission of COVID-19.

Face Mask Requirements

For the latest university masking requirements and additional information on ASTM masks, double masking, N95 masks, KN95 masks, and information for the immunocompromised, please visit ehs.yale.edu/mask-guidance.

When wearing masks, follow these practices:

- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before putting on and removing the mask.
- Your mouth and nose should be fully covered.
- Tie or secure the face covering to prevent slipping.
- Remove and replace mask if dirty, damaged or contaminated,
- If you have difficulty breathing when wearing a mask, it should be removed and replaced with a different mask.

Face Coverings in Yale Laboratories

Cloth face coverings are not allowed in Yale laboratories. Instead, 3-ply disposable surgical masks should be worn. ASTM rated masks can be obtained through Yale Printing & Publishing (YPPS) by clicking the “PPE Supply Replenishment” link. (VPN is required.) Coordinate departmental orders with your Lead Administrator. Masks worn in a laboratory must be disposed of when leaving the lab. As you do with other disposable laboratory PPE—such as gloves—the mask you wear in the laboratory should be removed and discarded before leaving the laboratory.

Face masks are not considered to be respirators. For concerns about respiratory protection for certain tasks and assignments, contact EHS at ehs@yale.edu for a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) hazard assessment. EHS will determine the appropriate respiratory protection for this work.

Caring for Your Face Mask

The disposable, 3-ply masks should be disposed of after every shift, and if damaged or contaminated. When removing your mask, only touch the loops that go around your ear. Masks can be disposed of in the normal trash.

At this time, a cloth mask is not recommended, except as an over-mask when double-masking. Most cloth masks have inferior filtration compared to the 3-ply or ASTM masks supplied by Yale. Cloth face masks can be worn in non-laboratory settings if double masking together with a surgical mask, and should be washed after each use. CDC instructions for washing face coverings are here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wash-cloth-face-coverings.html. It is important to always remove face coverings correctly and wash or sanitize your hands after handling or touching a used face covering.
**Clear Face Masks**

People who interact with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing or those who rely on lip reading and facial expressions should obtain a clear face mask, if required or desired. While not providing equivalent filtration, a clear face mask should be the first choice if a 3-ply mask or a cloth face covering is unsatisfactory for your needs. Clear face masks are washable and reusable but may fog as the person talks and are more difficult to clean than other reusable cloth face coverings. These can be obtained through Yale Printing & Publishing (YPPS). **Note:** Some people find that spreading a drop of dish soap across the clear panel can help reduce fogging. Fogging can also be prevented by sealing the mask at the nose ridge. Paper tape has been successfully used for this by many users.

**Face Shields**

**NOTE: THE USE OF FACE SHIELDS BY UNVACCINATED PERSONS REQUIRES 12-FOOT DISTANCING FROM OTHERS.**

Face shields are not a good substitute for masking because there is no filtration of the wearer’s droplets and aerosols. The CDC does not allow a face shield to substitute for a mask. The University is allowing the use of face shields for unvaccinated instructors and other persons without a mask only when the above options have been found unsatisfactory, with the following precautions:

- Must keep 12 feet or more from others.
- The room must be well ventilated.

For instructors,

- The length of instruction/proximity work should not exceed two hours.
- Commonly touched surfaces (e.g., desktops, lectern, microphone, etc.) must be decontaminated after class has ended.
- Do not use the room for an hour after the class has ended.

As mentioned, a face shield does not filter droplets or aerosols—they simply redirect them to the room via the shields’ gaps. The 12-foot distance allows for dispersion and dilution of aerosols, which is facilitated by good ventilation.

Some individuals disfavor face shields because of fogging and distorted speech. **Note:** Some people find that spreading a drop of dish soap across the clear panel can help reduce fogging. Fogging can also be prevented by sealing the mask at the nose ridge. Paper tape has been successfully used for this by many users.

Face shields should be ordered via SciQuest.
Questions?
For more information about masks, face coverings and respiratory protection, please contact Yale Environmental Health and Safety at chs@yale.edu or 203-785-3550.

Concerns
For personal health concerns and questions about Yale’s COVID-19 response and policies, you may call 203-432-6604 (toll-free at 866-924-9253). Available 8 am–5 pm, 7 days a week.
If you are comfortable doing so, you may report a concern about compliance with COVID-19 health and safety policies or regulations directly to your staff supervisor, your human resources representative, or a supervising faculty member. You may also make an anonymous or identified report through Yale’s hotline at 877-360-9253, or online at your.yale.edu/hotline. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You may also report a concern or seek additional COVID-19 information by contacting the 2-1-1 Connecticut Hotline.