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Owner Emily Vavalle:
 HCS Exec Dir Infection Prevention
 Policy Area Infection Prevention
 Applicability UNCHCS - All Owned Entities except Wayne

Mask Requirements for Patients, Visitors, and Teammates

APPLICABILITY:

This policy applies to the following entities (collectively referred to as "UNC Health" in this policy) (**Bold indicates an owned entity**):

Appalachian Regional Healthcare System	Onslow Memorial Hospital / Onslow Ambulatory Services
Blue Ridge HealthCare System	✓ Rex Healthcare / Rex Hospital
✓ Caldwell Memorial Hospital	Southeastern Regional Medical Center
✓ Chatham Hospital	✓ UNC Health Care System / UNC Medical Center*
✓ Johnston Health	✓ UNC Health Medical Group
Lenoir Memorial Hospital	✓ UNC Rockingham Health Care / UNC Rockingham Hospital
Margaret R. Pardee Memorial Hospital	Wayne Memorial Hospital
Nash Healthcare System/Nash Hospitals	

***UNC Medical Center includes all UNC Hospitals' facilities and the clinical patient care programs of the School of Medicine of UNC-Chapel Hill (including UNC Faculty Physicians).**

I. Description

This policy describes the use of masks worn by patients, visitors, or teammates in UNC Health facilities to prevent transmission of pathogens spread through the air. Mask wearing protects the wearer from droplets containing the pathogen shed by infected people and decreases the chance that the wearer will give the pathogen to others if they are infected.

II. Policy

Individuals covered by this policy may always choose to wear a mask at any time, even in settings where mask use is not required by this or an applicable UNC Health entity policy.

A. Patients, Visitors, and Teammates

- Patients presenting to UNC ambulatory areas with signs and symptoms of respiratory illness (e.g., sore throat, cough, runny nose) should be asked to wear a mask. Follow entity specific policies regarding masking for inpatient with respiratory illnesses.

NOTE:	Individuals with respiratory symptoms should NOT visit UNC Health facilities unless seeking direct medical care.
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- Teammates must wear a mask when providing direct care to patients on isolation precautions that require mask use (e.g., droplet, airborne), or to patients with respiratory symptoms.
- Masks may still be required for teammates, patients, and visitors in certain high-risk units and clinics and/or at certain times of the year as identified by both entity leadership and Infection Prevention, including:
 - In certain units and clinics based on their specific patient populations and patient care needs (e.g., immunocompromised patients or teammates, aerosol generating procedures, etc.). These areas will be identified based on patient populations and patient care needs.
 - In situations where masks are required, patients may remove their mask when alone in their room.
 - 'Masks Required' signs are available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) that can be printed/posted prominently in these high-risk areas.

Please respect the choices of our patients, visitors, and teammates if they choose to wear a mask or request that you wear a mask. Since patients may not always feel comfortable asking their care team to wear a mask, consider practicing "mask mirroring": if a patient is wearing a mask, please also wear a mask.

NOTE:	Facemasks and cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
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B. Teammates

Masking Reminders for Teammates

Though masks are not required in most areas, teammates should note the following:

- Masks are available for use in all settings. Teammates may choose to wear a mask or respirator for their personal protection at any time.
- Teammates should follow standard precautions and don a surgical mask during the evaluation and care of patients with respiratory symptoms.
- ***Teammates should not report to work if sick and should follow their entity's Occupational Health policies on return-to-work criteria.***

C. Local / Entity Policies

This system policy sets the minimum standard for mask use by patients, visitors, and teammates at the UNC Health entities listed above. These UNC Health entities may implement rules, policies, or procedures for mask-wearing and the use of other PPE that are more protective than those set out in this policy (e.g., require masks in more settings) as local conditions warrant (e.g., high incidence of employee absences or community transmission of respiratory pathogens), but may not be less protective. Entity leadership and Infection Prevention departments should coordinate to develop local recommendations and UNC Health entities should clearly communicate mask wearing requirements to its patients, companions, visitors, teammates, and ensure individuals are compliant with these requirements.

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
To update policy applicability table on active system policies	Taylor Roberts: Paralegal	09/2025

Applicability

Caldwell Memorial Hospital, Chatham Hospital, Johnston Health, UNC Health Care System, UNC Medical Center, UNC Medical Group, UNC Rex Healthcare, UNC Rockingham Health Care

Standards

No standards are associated with this document