

## Safety Tip Sheet

### Optimizing the Fit of Procedure (Surgical) Masks

UCSF Health provides masks (commonly referred to as surgical or procedure masks, Figures 1a & 1b) at designated employee entrance screening areas as a primary measure of source control\*.

*\*use of a face mask to cover a person's mouth and nose when they are talking, sneezing, or coughing to reduce the likelihood of transmission of infection by preventing the spread of respiratory secretions.*

#### You should know:

- The mask in Fig. 1B (white mask) is a medical protective mask and should not be used as a substitute for an N95 or PAPR
- No fit testing is required to wear this mask
- This mask is available as an alternate to the procedure blue mask

#### To achieve source control:

- Position the mask over the nose and mouth, wrap ear loops over the ears
- Gently mold the nose bridge so the top edge of the mask seals closely to the skin and beneath the eyeglasses or eye shields to help prevent lens fogging
- Change mask if it becomes wet or soiled

#### Enhance comfort while maintaining source control by:

- Twisting (Fig. 2) the ear loops or tying a knot (Fig. 3) and tucking in the side pleats
- Securing ear loops behind the head with an ear loop extender (Figs.4a & 4b) or use a claw type hair clip (Fig. 4c.)
- Adjusting ear loops/extender to achieve a snug fit all around your nose and mouth



Fig. 1a Procedure Mask



Fig. 1b Procedure Mask



Fig. 2 Twisted ear loop



Fig. 3 Tied ear loop



Fig. 4a Ear loop extender



Fig. 4b. Ear loop extender



Fig. 4c. Claw type hair clip

#### Cleaning instructions for reusable ear loop extenders and hair clips:

- Use only hospital-approved cleaning materials such as the wipes shown in Fig. 5.
- Wipe all surfaces of the ear loop extender and crevices between teeth at least once per shift and when visibly soiled.
- Replacement ear loop extenders (Figs. 6a. and 6b.) can be obtained from the main employee screening entry points located inside at Parnassus Hospital near the ambulance parking area, Mission Bay at the adult hospital entrance and at Mount Zion near the hospital horseshoe drop-off.



Fig. 5. Hospital-approved cleaning wipe



Fig. 6a. Ear loop extender -LONG



Fig. 6b. Ear loop extender -SHORT

# Optimizing the fit of Procedure (Surgical) Masks

Procedure (surgical) masks are important for controlling COVID-19 transmission, and these masks must have a good fit to maximize their benefits.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released new recommendations that highlight simple and effective methods to optimize how masks fit. These recommendations augment current strategies to create a safe health care environment and are especially important given the emergence of some variant strains of COVID-19 that may be more easily spread.

The CDC [recently demonstrated](#) that exposure to potentially infectious aerosols was decreased by up to 95% when both an infected and uninfected persons were wearing masks.

## At UCSF Health,

### Health care personnel should:

- Wear a hospital-issued procedure (surgical) mask or an N95 respirator (if an N95 is indicated) that covers the nose and mouth at all times, including while in break or team work rooms when not eating or drinking.
  - We do not recommend that health care personnel use two masks layered on top of each other
    - Studies show very little improvement in how well a mask works when adding a second procedure/surgical mask to another procedure/surgical mask
    - The CDC does NOT recommend wearing two disposable procedure/surgical masks
  - We do not allow use of cloth masks for health care personnel in our facilities, even if worn underneath a procedure mask
    - There are no cloth mask standards for filtration efficacy and no method to ensure a clean, laundered product
  - If you are using an N95 respirator, do not wear another mask underneath the N95 since this will interfere with the fit of the N95.
- We strongly encourage health care personnel to use these simple and effective methods to improve the fit of procedure/surgical masks.
  - Examples of how to optimize the fit of your mask include:
    - Knotting the ear loops while tucking and flattening the extra material as demonstrated in this [video](#)
    - Adding a twist to the ear loops before you put the mask on so that the elastic is in a crisscross
    - Using a plastic clip to pull the straps tighter behind your head. If you re-use the plastic clip make sure you clean it regularly with a hospital-grade disinfectant.

### Patients and visitors:

- Will be offered a procedure mask
  - Make sure that all patients and visitors are also masked, unless medically contraindicated or not age-appropriate
- If you have additional questions, contact [MedicalCenterSafety@ucsf.edu](mailto:MedicalCenterSafety@ucsf.edu)

### In the community setting:

- The CDC has released [new recommendations](#) for masking in *the community setting* which are aimed at improving the fit of the mask including wearing a procedure (surgical) mask beneath a cloth mask and knotting the ear loops while tucking and flattening the extra material as demonstrated in this [video](#).