

Preparing for Respiratory Illness Season (8.29.2023)

The season for increased respiratory illness is quickly approaching. This document outlines how Cincinnati Children's is communicating with our staff to prepare to keep staff and patients safe.

Cincinnati Children's implemented a three-tier precaution system based on the prevalence and spread of respiratory illnesses in our region and at the hospital. Moving between masking levels requires sustained and meaningful observed or expected changes in respiratory illness transmission. Thresholds are in development that will trigger movement for each level. We are currently working under Standard Precautions.

- **Standard.** When the prevalence of respiratory illness is reduced and stable.
- **Heightened (patient/public facing).** When prevalence is increased and extra precautions are needed in patient and public facing areas.
- **Heightened (all areas).** When the prevalence of respiratory illness is high and extra precautions are needed in all areas.

Standard Respiratory Precautions for Cincinnati Children's employees

- Don't come to work sick.
- Practice hand hygiene and cough etiquette
- Stay up to date on vaccinations.
 - All employees are required to be vaccinated for flu and COVID-19 (unless granted an approved exemption).
 - COVID-19 boosters are recommended but not required for all employees.
- Wear eye protection in clinical areas with risk of splash.
- Follow appropriate isolation protocols.
- Mask if you feel it's appropriate (your discretion).
- Respect the masking choices of others.

Be Ready To Implement Heightened Precautions

Depending on the prevalence of respiratory illness in our region and in our health system, our status could become heightened, which would mean additional precautions that include required masking in patient/public facing areas or potentially all areas.

Heightened Precautions (patient/public facing)

All Standard precautions apply with these additions/changes:

- Masking required for employees in patient care areas and public spaces.
- Masking required in all areas for employees who received exemptions for either COVID-19 or flu vaccine.
- Masking encouraged, but not required, for patients, families and visitors.

Additional precautions could apply based on the prevalence and spread of respiratory illnesses as well as recommendations or orders from authorities such as our health department or the CDC.



Heightened Precautions (all areas)

Standard precautions apply with these additions/changes:

- Masking required for all employees in all areas.
- Masking required for patients, families and visitors.

Additional precautions could apply based on the prevalence and spread of respiratory illnesses as well as recommendations or orders from authorities such as our health department or the CDC.

- Eye Protection Required
 - Upon entering a room where the patient is in Droplet or Strict Droplet Precautions (IC-4.1, IC-4.4, IC-4.11)
 - Participating in patient care that may involve body fluid exposure (e.g., patient gagging with NG tube placement or preparing breastmilk feeding)
 - Collecting or handling blood or body fluid specimens, including emptying foley bag or draining dialysate.
 - While performing aerosol-generating procedures
 - Handling of any body fluids
 - Handling of chemicals that involve a splash or fume risk
- Eye Protection Recommended
 - Participating in routine patient care activities where there is a low risk of body fluid exposure.
 - Participating in care for patients and families who are not known or suspected of having a respiratory infection.

Eye protection can be removed in clinical areas when not patient facing (i.e., sitting at a computer terminal).

Consider Receiving An Updated COVID-19 Vaccination

An updated COVID-19 vaccine is not required as part of our annual campaign, but it is strongly recommended. We expect the vaccine to be available in September or October and suggest you receive it from your doctor or a community provider. We continue to require that all employees receive a COVID-19 vaccination at their time of hire. As a pediatric health system, it's vital that we maintain this standard because we care for kids who can't be vaccinated.

Protecting our patients, families, visitors, community and employees is our foundational responsibility. To help ensure continued preparedness against respiratory illness year-round,