Universal Masking Policy at UHN

Information for outpatients coming to UHN for appointments or treatment, and pre-approved visitors

What is a universal masking policy?
A universal masking policy means asking all people coming to the hospital for appointments or to visit to wear a mask, even if they do not have any signs of an infection.

Why was this policy created?
COVID-19 may spread by people who do not have any symptoms. Asking healthy people to wear a mask can help to prevent this asymptomatic spread to other patients and to our health care providers.

What if I don’t want to wear a mask?
UHN strongly encourages all patients and visitors to wear a mask. If there is a reason why you are not able to wear a mask, such as a health condition that may make it hard for you to breathe with a mask on, tell the entrance screening staff. They will discuss your situation and your options with you.

Where will I get a mask when I arrive at UHN?
Our entrance screening staff will ask you to wash your hands and then give you a mask. They will explain how to put it on properly. There will also be posters showing you how to put on your mask. You will wash your hands again after putting on your mask.

Please note that entrance screening staff will only be giving you one mask per day.
I have my own disposable or reusable mask or face covering. Can I wear this to my appointment instead of a mask given to me by UHN?

We know many people now have made or bought their own reusable masks, or may have a personal stock of procedure masks. If you wear your own mask to the hospital and want to wear it during your appointment, entrance screening staff will check it to be sure it is effective.

If you have a disposable mask, we ask that you make sure it is clean and new (has not been worn before). Please make sure it covers both your nose and mouth, and secures well with the ties or ear loops provided.

If you have a reusable mask or face covering, also be sure it is clean. You should wash it in between uses. You can wear it into the hospital as long as it does all of the following:

- is comfortable and fits snugly against your face
- is secured with ties or ear loops
- has multiple layers of fabric
- allows you to breathe easily
- can be machined washed and dried without causing damage or changing shape

Are patients who are admitted to the hospital (inpatients) also wearing masks?

At this time, only people coming during the day for an appointment or treatment (outpatients), and approved visitors, are required to wear a mask. Inpatients are not required to wear masks, unless they have COVID-19 or are suspected of having COVID-19.

Can I take my mask off once my appointment is over?

Please leave your mask on the entire time you are inside the hospital. Only remove it at the exit. If you need to take it off to eat or drink, or as part of your medical appointment, first wash your hands and then remove your mask carefully, without touching your face.
How do I safely remove my mask?
It is important that you remove your mask carefully to reduce your risk of infection.

First: wash your hands using soap and water or hand sanitizer. Grab your mask by the ear loops and pull it away from your face. Do not touch your face or the outside of the mask.

If you are removing a disposable mask, place it in a garbage bin. If you are removing a reusable/cloth mask, place it in a plastic bag to take home to wash.

After you remove your mask, make sure to wash your hands again.

What should I do if my mask gets wet or dirty?
If your mask gets wet or dirty during your appointment, let your care team know that you need a new mask.

How else can I prepare for my entrance screening at UHN?
- Arrive a few minutes early in case there are any delays or lines.
- Have your appointment card or myUHN Portal schedule ready to show the screening staff.
- If you are a visitor who has been pre-approved by a unit manager to visit an inpatient, make sure you know what unit you are visiting and have any required documentation that you’ve been asked to bring.

How can I learn more about masks?
If you have any questions about wearing a mask while you’re at the hospital, please ask our entrance screening staff or your health care team.

For general information about preventing the spread of COVID-19, you can call your local health unit or visit their website, contact the Toronto Public Health Helpline (416 338 7600), or call Telehealth Ontario (1 866 797 0000).