

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold. Those who are older than 60 or have underlying health conditions such as heart or lung disease, and diabetes, are particularly at risk.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

CLOTH MASKS AND OTHER NON-MEDICAL FACE COVERINGS

Cloth masks and other non-medical face coverings are recommended for all other personnel both public and private in interacting in their workplace and community. Staying home when ill, maintaining 6 feet of social distancing, washing hands, using hand sanitizer and cleaning frequently touched surfaces provide an appropriate level of protections. Additionally, people who are the most at risk due to age or other chronic medical problems should practice the utmost caution including remaining home and limiting time in public in the future.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends everyday actions to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, such as avoiding people who are sick, avoiding touching your eyes or nose, and covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue. People who are sick should [stay home](#) and not go into crowded public places or visit people in hospitals. Workers who are sick should follow CDC guidelines and [stay home when they are sick](#).

Check the Back on Track Indiana Industry Guidelines [here](#) for specific guidelines on face coverings for particular workplace settings.

Cloth face coverings should:

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops
- include multiple layers of fabric
- allow for breathing without restriction
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

SURGICAL MASKS

Surgical masks should be reserved for healthcare providers that in their role must maintain close prolonged contact with a patient in order to provide and perform healthcare. Healthcare providers include first responders who in their role must provide healthcare to a patient until dedicated healthcare providers arrive.

- Occasionally, patients who are immunocompromised due to the medications he or she takes (chemotherapy) will be provided and asked to wear a surgical grade mask
- This does not include people in “high risk” categories such as age and chronic medical conditions. They will be asked to appropriately social distance and wear face coverings if they need to go to public settings
- This does not include personnel who in their role provide service through interview or speaking to the public. Including in offices and in people’s homes. Social distancing can and should be maintained in these instances. Cloth masks and over face coverings are appropriate for these interactions.
- Prioritize facemasks for selected activities such as:
 - For provision of essential surgeries and procedures
 - During care activities where splashes and sprays are anticipated
 - During activities where prolonged face-to-face or close contact with a potentially infectious patient is unavoidable
 - For performing aerosol generating procedures if respirators are no longer available

N95 OR EQUIVALENT RESPIRATOR

Personnel only require an N95 or equivalent respirator if they are performing or are in the same closed space of someone performing an aerosol producing procedure. Aerosol producing procedures include but is not limited to providing a nebulizer treatment (this does not include the use of an MDI inhaler), placing a patient on non-invasive ventilation (BIPAP and CPAP), performing bag valve mask ventilations, performing CPR, intubating or extubating a patient, and performing dental and oral procedures with air, suction, and/or drill equipment that have the potential of aerosolizing the virus.

- Development of a comprehensive list of AGPs for healthcare settings has not been possible, due to limitations in available data on which procedures may generate potentially infectious aerosols and the challenges in determining if reported transmissions during AGPs are due to aerosols or other exposures.
 - There is neither expert consensus, nor sufficient supporting data, to create a definitive and comprehensive list of AGPs for healthcare settings.
- Commonly performed medical procedures that are often considered AGPs, or that create uncontrolled respiratory secretions, include:
 - open suctioning of airways
 - sputum induction
 - cardiopulmonary resuscitation
 - endotracheal intubation and extubation
 - non-invasive ventilation (e.g., BiPAP, CPAP)



- bronchoscopy
 - manual ventilation
 - Based on limited available data, it is uncertain whether aerosols generated from some procedures may be infectious, such as:
 - nebulizer administration*
 - high flow O2 delivery
- *Aerosols generated by nebulizers are derived from medication in the nebulizer. It is uncertain whether potential associations between performing this common procedure and increased risk of infection might be due to aerosols generated by the procedure or due to increased contact between those administering the nebulized medication and infected patients.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions about COVID-19 may be directed to the ISDH COVID-19 Call Center at the toll-free number 877-826-0011 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>
- Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html>
- CDC COVID-19 webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: <https://coronavirus.in.gov>