University of Pittsburgh
COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: Face Coverings, Personal Protective Equipment, and Personal Hygiene

I. Purpose

This document details the University of Pittsburgh’s (University) Standards and Guidelines on face coverings, personal protective equipment (PPE), and personal hygiene. These Standards and Guidelines are applied to each of the University’s COVID-19 Operational Postures (High Risk, Elevated Risk, and Guarded Risk). More information on these Operational Postures and their Gating Criteria can be accessed at the following website: www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/operational-postures

The Standards and Guidelines outlined below are subject to change as deemed necessary by the Health Care Advisory Group’s (HCAG) recommendation to the Senior Leadership Team and approval of the Chancellor. Communication about the University’s current Standards and Guidelines will be announced by the Chancellor and posted on the following website: https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/.

The University will always operate in compliance with federal, state, and local health standards and restrictions, including Pennsylvania Department of Health guidance. The University reserves the right to implement additional health standards and restrictions that reflect the needs of the University and the health, safety, and well-being of its community.

As conditions and circumstances change, this set of standards and guidelines may need to be revised.

II. Scope

The Standards and Guidelines below apply to the entire University, including all University members, campuses, and properties owned by the University or other properties when occupied by the University (e.g., leases).

III. Definitions

A. Face coverings: Any type of cloth or disposable material that covers the mouth and nose and can be safely secured in place (e.g., looped around ears or around the head) while in use. For the purposes of this guidance, face coverings include both cloth masks and medical procedure masks (also called surgical masks in certain contexts).

B. Personal protective equipment (PPE): Equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses. These injuries and illnesses may result from contact with chemical, radiological, physical, electrical, mechanical, or other workplace hazards. Personal protective equipment may include
items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, or coveralls, vests, and full body suits.

C. **University member**: Refers to all full- and part-time faculty, staff, students, visitors, volunteers, fellows, trainees, and interns on all campuses.

IV. **Face Coverings**

Face coverings are worn to prevent asymptomatic and symptomatic individuals from spreading viruses, such as COVID-19, to other individuals. Face coverings reduce the volume of respiratory droplets that are expelled during common social interactions and human functions such as talking, breathing, coughing, sneezing, and laughing.

The **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** recommends that individuals who are not fully vaccinated (i.e., it has not been at least two weeks since they received the second dose in a 2-dose series vaccine (Pfizer or Moderna) or a single-dose vaccine (Johnson & Johnson)) wear a well-fitting face covering when leaving their home, regardless of whether they have fever or symptoms of COVID-19, to slow the spread of the virus.

Simple cloth face coverings are made from common materials, such as a scarf or bandanna. The cloth face covering should fully cover the mouth and nose and fit snugly against the sides of the face so there are no gaps. Face coverings may be used (and re-used) for as long as possible. Face coverings that become soiled should be laundered if re-usable. Please refer to **CDC guidance** and Appendix A for additional information on how to select and wear a Face covering.

The Face coverings requirements outlined below apply in each of the University’s Operational Postures. Pursuant to **CDC recommendations**, children under the age of 2 are exempt from the University’s face covering requirements.

- **Indoor Settings.** Without regard to vaccination status, a well-fitting Face covering must be worn in campus buildings at all times, except while eating or drinking in a designated dining area; when in an enclosed private, single occupancy space (e.g., private study room or private office); or when in your living space with members of your household or pod.

- **Outdoor Settings.** Vaccinated individuals are not required to wear Face coverings outdoors when on campus. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated are required to wear Face coverings when outdoors when they are unable to maintain sustained physical distance of six (6) feet from individuals who are not members of their residential cohort.

V. **Personal Protective Equipment**

Personal protective equipment (PPE), which includes specialized equipment like N95 respirators, surgical masks and gowns will only be necessary for those University members who are told by their supervisor or instructor that PPE is required during the scope of their work, duty, or studies. PPE will not be required to engage in routine activities on campus and in campus facilities. As cloth face coverings remain the recommended protection for members of the general public, the majority of faculty, staff, and students will only need to use face coverings as outlined in Section IV and practice good personal hygiene as outlined in Section VI.

Face coverings, which are discussed in Section IV above, are not PPE, like surgical masks and N95 respirators. A surgical mask (or medical procedure mask) is a disposable device that creates a
physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer. If worn properly, a surgical mask is meant to help block large-particle droplets, splashes, sprays, or splatter that may contain germs. An N95 respirator is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very efficient filtration of airborne particles. The edges of the N95 respirator are designed to form a seal around the nose and mouth. N95 respirators are in short supply and should be reserved for healthcare workers and medical first responders. The CDC provides Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE and Equipment as well as FAQs relevant to the use of PPE.

For more specific guidance on PPE, please consult the University’s Department of Environmental Health and Safety Guidance and Use Case Scenarios for Face Coverings and PPE.

VI. Personal Hygiene

Personal hygiene is a key element of mitigating the spread of COVID-19 to others and protecting yourself from the virus. The below items outline best personal hygiene practices. These standards and guidelines remain constant for all Operational Postures.

- Skin is an effective barrier against COVID-19. Membranes inside your eyes, nose, and mouth are not effective barriers. If you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands and your hands have been exposed to the virus, you may become infected. Gloves may or may not be effective in preventing infection, and gloves do not replace good hand hygiene. You can become infected with COVID-19 if you touch an object or surface that was recently contaminated with respiratory droplets containing the virus, or during social/physical contact with other people, and then touch your mouth, nose, or eyes.

- Good hand hygiene includes washing your hands frequently and thoroughly (i.e., between fingers and surfaces of palms) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and then thoroughly drying your hands with a paper towel. If you are unable to wash your hands with soap and water, use hand sanitizer with alcohol or benzalkonium chloride to cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until dry.

- Hand hygiene should be practiced as much as possible, and especially before touching your face, before preparing/eating food, after coughing or sneezing, before and after touching high-contact surfaces, and before and after putting on a face covering or mask.

- When sneezing or coughing, cover your nose and mouth with the inner angle of your arm or use a disposable tissue. When at all possible, avoid touching your face, including your mouth, eyes, and nose.

VII. Related Authorities

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidance: Face Coverings
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Order: Face coverings – public transportation
Pennsylvania Department of Health COVID-19 guidance
Process to Reopen Pennsylvania
University’s COVID-19 Operational Postures and Gating Criteria
University’s Department of Environmental Health and Safety Guidance and Use Case Scenarios for Face Coverings and PPE
VIII. Contact Information and Public Accessibility

This document is posted on the Office of Policy Development and Management’s website and can be found at: https://www.policy.pitt.edu/university-policies-and-procedures/covid-19-standards-and-guidelines. For questions related to this document, please contact: Resilience Steering Committee at ResilienceSteeringCommittee@pitt.edu.
Appendix A – Additional Guidelines: Face Coverings, Personal Hygiene, and PPE

How to Wear a Face Covering

- Face coverings must cover the nose and mouth and fit tightly against the face, with no gaps, to be effective.
  - A cloth face covering can be layered on top of a medical procedure mask (forming a “double mask”) for improved fit and filtration. Consistent with CDC guidance, the University does not require double masks.
  - Face coverings will be more effective if they are made with tightly woven fabric (i.e., fabrics that do not let light pass through when held up to a light source) and with more than one layer.

- To check for face covering fit:
  - Check for gaps by cupping your hands around the outside edges of the face covering. Make sure no air is flowing from the area near your eyes or from the sides of the face covering.
  - If the face covering has a good fit, you will feel warm air come through the front of the face covering and may be able to see the face covering move in and out with each breath.

- Follow this guidance when removing your face covering:
  - Untie the strings or stretch the ear loops.
  - Handle only by the ear loops or ties.
  - Try to avoid touching face, eyes, nose, or mouth.
  - Wash hands after removing face covering.
  - Launder cloth face coverings routinely at home.

Use and Care of Your Face Covering

- Face coverings are not personal protective equipment (PPE), like surgical masks and N95 respirators. Face coverings may be used (and re-used) for as long as possible. Face coverings that become soiled should be laundered if re-usable or replaced if disposable. Surgical masks and N95 respirators are in short supply. They should be reserved for health care workers and medical first responders, per CDC guidance.

- Face covering use is voluntary while you are alone inside your own private office or dorm room.

- Face coverings protect others in case you are unknowingly transmitting COVID-19 before showing symptoms—“my mask protects you; your mask protects me.” Use of a face covering does not replace the need practice good hand hygiene; avoid sitting directly across from others, especially in common spaces, break rooms or eating areas; and other COVID-19 mitigation practices.

- Keep your face covering with you as you would your cell phone and be ready to wear it in any situation in which you are not in control of your space, such as lobbies, elevators, and even outside. When removing your face covering, try to avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth. Wash or sanitize your hands after removing your face covering.
• Single-use disposable face coverings can be disposed of in the regular trash.
• Face coverings with one-way valves (e.g., plastic disk on mask) do not protect others. One-way valves allow your breath to be shared with the public, as if you are not wearing a face covering. Face coverings with one-way valves are not an appropriate substitute for a proper face covering and should not be used.

Applicability of these Standards and Guidelines to Specific Situations

• There is specific face covering, social distancing, and PPE guidance for particular situations on the Department of Environmental Health and Safety website for the following:
  o Personal use in laboratories or other areas with established PPE requirements
  o Clinical research
  o Aerosol-generating clinical research procedures
  o Animal procedures, including surgery
  o Tight spaces or close-proximity work activities
  o Interacting with research participants (on campus or off campus)
  o Off-campus studies
  o Arts with singing or brass and woodwind instruments
  o Theater arts

For additional information, see this CDC website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html