

# Making sense of masks

2/11/2021

New CDC guidance has led to a lot of questions, particularly around the need for “double masking.” While wearing two masks may be better in some situations outside of the hospital, this is not the case in the hospital where high-quality masks are used. **Rather, the new guidance reemphasizes that the quality and fit of a mask is essential for best preventing transmission.**

Lurie Children’s disposable and hospital-issued non-disposable masks were chosen because of their high quality. Correct and consistent use of these masks is a critical step everyone can take to stop the spread of COVID-19. Masks work best when everyone wears them, but proper fit of a mask is integral to providing the best protection to you and those around you.

In March 2020, Lurie Children’s implemented a universal masking policy requiring all faculty and staff to wear a hospital-issued mask for the entirety of the workday. Since this implementation, internal data have suggested that the high quality and recommended use of masks are extremely effective. We have seen very few cases of suspected transmission of COVID-19 amongst healthcare workers in the hospital, particularly when masks are used as advised. As a reminder, please use the masks provided by Lurie Children’s as these meet the below standards.

## **Improving the fit of your hospital-issued medical-grade standard disposable facemask and your Lurie Children’s cloth non-disposable facemask:**

- Completely cover mouth and nose
- Gently flatten and mold the nose wire over your nose to fit close to your face. Do not pinch the wire as this may result in unwanted gaps over the bridge of your nose.
- Ensure it fits snugly over mouth, nose, and chin. Check for gaps around the outside edges of your mask and make sure no air is flowing from the sides of the mask or near your eyes.
- Optionally for your disposable mask, knot and tuck the ear loops to minimize gaps on side of the mask. For video instructions, see: <https://youtu.be/UANi8Cc71A0>.
- For the Lurie cloth non-disposable mask, the ear loop adjusters can be moved to tighten the mask and minimize gaps on the side of the mask.
- The CDC does NOT recommend layering two medical grade masks. It is better to optimize the fit of a single mask using the tips described above.
- Mask fitters or the addition of a cloth mask should NOT be used while at work as they may become contaminated and cannot be cleaned or disinfected immediately. However, you may consider these practices while in the community, not within the medical center.

## **Quality of hospital-issued masks:**

- The medical grade masks are a 3-ply, ASTM level 1 (fluid resistant) mask (see image below)
- The Lurie cloth mask is made of tightly woven, 3-ply cotton material with adjustable ear loops
- Both masks have a nose wire allowing for a more secure fit

