

May 15, 2020

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*Sent on behalf of Dr. Bob Lynch, Tulane Health System CEO*



Dear Tulane Health System colleagues,

As we continue to see a decrease in the number of COVID-19 patients requiring hospitalization in our region – and as our supply chain team has strengthened our stores of PPE – we are going to expand our use of N-95 masks.

Effective Wednesday, May 20, all caregivers who treat confirmed COVID-19 patients or highly suspected patients under investigation for COVID-19, or who perform high-risk aerosol generating procedures, will be provided N-95 respirators. These will replace the surgical masks recommended by the CDC during COVID-19 surges that these colleagues are currently wearing.

The PPE processes we've used so far have been safe and effective. But as we have done throughout this pandemic, we are meeting and, where possible exceeding, CDC recommendations to equip our teams to provide safe, effective care.

In order to expand our distribution of N-95s, we will begin re-issuing sterilized masks. The sterilization process has been tested by the federal government and has been shown to [effectively sterilize the mask](#) with no degradation of its effectiveness for up to 30 recycles. At that point, the elastic in the straps starts to deteriorate – but the mask itself remains effective. We plan to not exceed 20 cycles of N-95 masks, and we will of course replace any masks that are damaged or soiled.

We want to ensure that the sterilized mask you receive is your own. To accomplish this, there are a few process changes in how N-95s are distributed and collected.

- When obtaining masks from the PPE room, you must first label them with your first and last name, your 3-4 ID and your department code. The PPE team will assist you in assuring the mask is properly labeled.
- Lipstick and foundation is prohibited if you are wearing an N-95, as it soils the mask.
- Facial hairstyles must conform to [CDC recommendations](#). If they do not, the mask will not properly seal, so you will not be issued one.
- After use, the masks must be placed in the green bags so they can be sent for sterilization. Since your masks are labeled, failure to return masks could lead to a return to current issuing practices for those who do not have recycled masks to use.

We will continue to closely monitor the pandemic, our PPE supplies and our local response, especially as our community begins the process to reopen, and we will adapt as needed to ensure the safety of our colleagues and patients, especially if we see another surge of COVID-19 patients. Thank you again for your cooperation and service to those in need.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Lynch  
CEO  
Tulane Health System