

March 30, 2020
1:30 PM

Statement on use of cloth masks

Since announcing that we are accepting donations of PPE, masks and other supplies, we have received many generous offers from our community and questions from staff about the feasibility of using cloth masks in lieu of or in addition to isolation masks. We are so appreciative of this generosity, and understand that our staff and community are looking for any alternative to address the shortage of PPE at hospitals across the country.

However, based on the recommendation of our infection prevention team, Main Line Health cannot support nor permit the use of cloth masks in any capacity.

At this time, there is no science to suggest that cloth masks have a personal protective benefit, and no guidance or research is available regarding the safest way to handle, package and store these types of masks when they are not in use. Without proper testing and guidance, we are concerned about the potential for cross- contamination and any additional issues that may arise and put our staff at greater risk.

Additionally, we have received questions from staff who would like to wear cloth masks under or on top of their isolation masks. Wearing a cloth mask under an isolation mask may affect the efficacy of the isolation mask, and wearing it over the isolation mask may also lead to unintended cross-contamination.

With these factors in mind, we cannot allow any physicians, providers or staff to wear cloth masks alone, or over/under an isolation mask. This decision is made with the safety of our entire MLH team in mind. Our Supply Chain team continues to work aggressively to increase our supply of masks and PPE for the protection of our team, and appreciate your patience and cooperation as we work to ensure the safety of you and our patients.