



Date: December 23, 2024 **System Memo: #435**

To: All System members and NCH EMS students
From: Vasilios (Bill) Toliopoulos, BSN, RN, PHRN, EMS Administrative Director
Kourtney Chesney BSN, RN, PM, EMS System Coordinator & Education Program Director

RE: **Updated masking guidelines**

Background

On Friday, December 20, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recommended that healthcare systems take additional precautions to mitigate transmission. With the most recent increase in occurrences related to Novel H5N1 “bird flu” strain of influenza, RSV, and Influenza, recently, some healthcare systems have announced changes to their masking criteria.

Endeavor Health System will require masks on **Thursday, December 26, 2024**.

Lutheran General Hospital will be implementing a temporary masking mandate as of **Monday, January 6, 2025**.

Based on this, we are amending our guidelines related to masking effective immediately:

EMS Guidelines

- Masks are optional for patients, persons who accompany them in an ambulance, and EMS personnel with the following exceptions:
 - Wear a medical grade mask when caring for immunocompromised persons and use good judgement for masking around other vulnerable patients.
 - Medical grade masks must be worn by patients experiencing respiratory virus symptoms. And personnel shall wear a well-fitting medical grade mask (or N95 prn) when caring for persons with respiratory symptoms.
 - Respect patients’ wishes when they ask you to mask.
- **Please stay home when you are experiencing cold or flu symptoms. Do not care for patients while ill.** Report any fever and/or S&S of respiratory illness or infection per employer/student guidelines.
- Use excellent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette in all situations.

We will continue to monitor regional trends and provide further updates as needed. Thank you for your partnership in keeping our patients, communities, and each other safe.

References:

<https://www.ems1.com/ems-products/personal-protective-equipment-ppe/articles/quick-reference-guide-selecting-the-appropriate-ppe-pKDtWrvCvToDRkoW/>

[Preventing Transmission of Viral Respiratory Pathogens in Healthcare Settings | Infection Control | CDC](#)