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From: Heidi Chapman on behalf of Amy Tucker
Sent: Thursday, April 27, 2023 10:07 AM
To: Amy Tucker
Subject: CMO BLAST: Covid Update for April 27

Importance: High

Covid Update

April 27, 2023

Effective immediately, masks are optional throughout all areas of Upstate—including clinical areas, with exceptions.

Mask mandates continue for interactions with hematology/oncology, organ transplant, and burn patients. Visitors will be required to wear masks when visiting compromised patients.

Masks are strongly encouraged for interactions with all patients who are at high risk of severe Covid, including those over 65 years of age, those with renal insufficiency, diabetes, and any underlying medical condition or medication use which may be immunosuppressive. A full list of at risk conditions can be found [on the CDC website](#).

Masking in the outpatient setting should follow the same guidance as for the in-patient setting.

All clinicians are expected to advocate for their at-risk patients and direct droplet precautions be implemented to mandate masking for those patients.

Upstate's infection control, infectious disease, and public health experts continue to strongly recommend continued universal masking for all in-patient encounters because virus transmission does continue, Upstate cares for highly complex and ill patients, and because of the potential difficulty with determining who is and is not at risk.

However, Upstate experts do recognize masking may impact patient care, communication, and overall staff well-being. They also recognize that at this time there are a number of factors which present an opportunity to relax mask mandates, including: declining virus transmission rates, declining hospitalizations due to Covid, stability in the circulating variants, declining numbers of staff out of work due to Covid, moderate to high levels of population immunity as a result of natural infection, vaccination, or both, available and effective treatment options, and widely available testing options.

Upstate's team will continue to monitor these factors and, if trends change masking policy may also change.

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