



Lifespan

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Revised Guidance on Respiratory Protection and Fit-Testing

January 16, 2021

The Lifespan Infection Control team had issued guidance on respiratory protection, requiring N95-level protection for all patient-facing activities to begin this Monday, January 18, 2021. This change exceeded the safety guidelines set by the CDC and was intended to enhance the safety protections we have in place for providers and staff. You can [read more from Infection Control on this safety initiative here.](#)

While we continue to strongly encourage adherence to the above updated guidance, we recognize that some areas are experiencing significant staffing shortages and have struggled to get all patient-facing staff fit-tested in advance of January 18. **While N95-level protection is still required for all patient-facing activities in areas with COVID positive/PUI patients, we will not require N95-level protection for non-COVID positive/non-PUI patients at this time.** In areas without COVID positive/PUI patients, employees not successfully fit-tested by Monday, January 18, may continue to work using the Level 2 surgical mask.

For employees who have already been fit-tested, we strongly encourage the use of N95-level protection (Elastomeric, Envo, N95, CAPR/PAPR) for all patient-facing activities. In addition, we continue to encourage any employee who has not yet been vaccinated to schedule an appointment as soon as possible.

We also recognize that there is a small subset of employees who have not been successfully fit-tested due to facial hair or other reasons. Employees who are unable to be fit-tested due to facial hair, may request to be fit-tested using a beard wrap. If fit-testing is successful, they may continue to work with a beard so long as a seal is maintained using a beard wrap. Employees who fail fit-testing with a beard wrap or because of facial structure, inability to taste, or other medical reasons, must use a CAPR/PAPR if assigned to COVID positive/PUI patients.

Employees may request a workplace accommodation under Lifespan's policies. Those who believe they are eligible may contact their supervisor or Employee and Occupational Health Services and complete the relevant accommodation request form.

You can read the attached [policy for guidance](#), also posted on the [intranet fit-testing page](#) and refer to the [revised FAQs posted here](#) and attached. You can also contact the Incident Command number at your affiliate, Employee Health and Occupational Services, or your HR Business Partner with further questions on this change. Thank you for your cooperation with this important safety initiative.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Wood, DO, Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer

Cathy Duquette, PhD, RN, Executive Vice President, Quality and Safety, Chief Nursing Executive

