

Policy Statement: Gloves, Face Coverings, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

September 4, 2020



This policy statement defines suggested best practices at MIT for the use of gloves, face coverings, and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the time of COVID-19. The policy was developed by the PPE Committee in coordination with MIT Medical, the Environment, Health and Safety Office (EHS), and the Research Ramp Up Committee.

ON CAMPUS

- Face coverings, [such as cloth coverings](#), are required on campus and in common areas and public spaces, per [order](#) of the City of Cambridge. During the summer months (until midnight on September 22, 2020), face coverings may be removed temporarily when an individual is outdoors and a physical distance of at least six (6) feet from others can be maintained. Cloth face coverings may slow the spread of the virus and help people who may have the virus and do not know it from transmitting it to others. Wearing a face covering will help protect people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. You must wear a face covering in:
 - Lobbies and hallways
 - Stairwells and elevators
 - Garages
 - Outdoors when social distancing is not possible, i.e., at sidewalks, bus stops, parking lots
 - **At all times around other people, including outdoors when social distancing is not possible**
- Cloth face coverings or face masks **must be worn at all times** while in campus buildings (including in elevators, shared offices, and restrooms).

Exceptions include:

- Anyone with a disability, medical condition, or trouble breathing whose healthcare professional has documented a recommendation against wearing a mask ([more information available here](#))
 - When you are consuming food or drink
 - When an employee is communicating with a hearing-impaired person, for which the employee's mouth needs to be visible
 - When wearing a mask may introduce a safety hazard in the workplace; check with your DLC for area-specific exceptions
 - When you are alone in a private office or personal space with a closed door
- Face coverings and face masks are available from MIT for free as needed; it is acceptable to provide your own. [Use proper technique for putting on and taking off a face covering or face mask](#).
 - Supplies of face coverings and face masks are available in the Lobby of Building 7 and may be available at other locations on campus. Contact your DLC's administrative officer for more information.

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- Cloth face coverings should be washed and kept for reuse.
- Cloth face coverings do not provide the same level of filtration as an N-95 respirator; however, they can be effective at reducing the transmission of larger droplets expelled when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. Wearing a face covering will help protect people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

IN LABORATORIES

- Cloth face coverings or face masks **must be worn at all times** while in labs.

Exceptions include:

- Anyone with a disability, medical condition, or trouble breathing whose healthcare professional has documented a recommendation against wearing a mask ([more information available here](#))
 - When an employee is communicating with a hearing-impaired person, for which the employee's mouth needs to be visible
 - When wearing a mask may introduce a safety hazard in the workplace; check with your DLC for area-specific exceptions
- It is acceptable to wear the same cloth face covering that you arrived with into the lab and acceptable to leave the lab with the same cloth face covering, provided it is not contaminated with hazardous materials and has not become torn.
 - Experiments that did not require a surgical mask or N95 respirator prior to the COVID-19 pandemic do not require these protective devices now; a cloth face covering is sufficient.
 - It is acceptable to continue to use surgical or N-95 masks if such masks are used under normal conditions for protection during the normal course of research activities, such as when a surgical mask is intended to protect the wearer from splashes of potentially contaminated biological fluids. Surgical masks should be used in lieu of cloth face coverings during work in BL2+ containment.
 - If there was no risk of exposure to hazardous materials when the experiments were performed without any face covering, there is no additional risk of contaminating the cloth covering from the same experiments now.
 - The highest risk of contamination would be from touching the cloth face covering with contaminated gloves. In the event your mask becomes contaminated, please replace your mask. In some cases, a face shield could be used to protect the cloth mask.

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- The use of engineering controls (i.e., a fume hood or biosafety cabinet) would also protect the user and cloth face covering from possible contamination.
- Use of cloth face coverings and face masks should be carefully reviewed by lab managers and EHS in cases where flames or heat sources are used or when straps could be caught in equipment. [Some experiments involving flammable and pyrophoric chemicals may require a flame-resistant face covering](#) as determined through a risk assessment with the PI or DLC. Please contact the EHS Office (environment@mit.edu) to assist in making this determination.
- There is no change in guidance on wearing gloves. Gloves should continue to be worn to protect oneself from hazardous materials. Gloves should not be worn outside the lab.
- There is no change in guidance for gowns or lab coats.
- [Shared PPE \(e.g., lab coats, safety glasses, face shields, cryogenic gloves\) should be avoided](#), and PPE items should be dedicated to one user only. If sharing PPE cannot be avoided, decontaminate the PPE before and after each use. Please contact the EHS Office (environment@mit.edu) if you have questions about PPE decontamination.