This policy statement defines suggested best practices at MIT for the use of gloves, face masks, 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.

Wearing face masks, maintaining physical distance, and washing hands frequently are effective tools in minimizing the spread of this virus. Face masks limit the spread of airborne particles that may carry virus. Since many individuals who are infected do not experience symptoms, wearing a face mask can help protect you and the people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

ON CAMPUS

- Well-fitted face masks, such as [masks recommended by the CDC](https://www.cdc.gov), must be worn at all times indoors on campus, regardless of vaccination status. The same requirements apply to visitors on campus. To protect yourself and others from COVID-19, CDC continues to recommend that you wear the most protective mask you can that fits well and that you will wear consistently. Some mask types provide better protection than others. For example, a cloth mask may not provide as much protection as a higher filtration mask, such as a KF94. MIT provides higher filtration masks at all testing drop-off sites and in residence halls, and they can be obtained through your DLC. Wearing a highly protective mask is especially important in situations where social distancing is difficult and/or for people at increased risk for severe disease. Face masks are not required outdoors on campus for vaccinated individuals. Unvaccinated individuals are required to wear a face mask outdoors when they can't maintain 3 feet of distance with others.

You must wear a face mask in:
- Campus buildings, including shared offices, classrooms, and restrooms
- Lobbies and hallways
- Stairwells and elevators
- Garages
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to require that face masks be worn in [specific spaces](https://www.mit.edu) on our campus, including at MIT Medical and on MIT shuttle buses.

Exceptions include:
- Anyone with a disability, medical condition, or trouble breathing who has explicit approval from the MIT Disabilities Services and Medical Leaves Office (DSMLO) ([more information available here](https://www.mit.edu)).
- If an employee is in need of medical services that require the temporary removal of the face mask.
- When eating and drinking indoors (currently permitted in all campus buildings), as follows: When dining indoors with others at MIT, individuals may lower their masks when actively consuming food or taking a sip of a drink. Follow MIT's
Policy Statement: Gloves, Face Masks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
February 10, 2022

**eating indoors policy.** MIT continues to encourage those on campus to dine outdoors whenever possible.

- When speaking in a group setting where all others present are masked (e.g., a faculty member, instructor, or TA giving a lecture; a guest speaker at an event; a student asking a question in class; a staff member making a comment in a meeting), a fully vaccinated speaker may lower or remove their mask while speaking and then raise or replace their mask to allow others to speak.
  - In a given space, only one mask should be down or off at a time. However, when multiple speakers or performers are together on stage, they may be unmasked at the same time if they maintain 6 feet of physical distance from all others (including audience members).
  - Unvaccinated speakers and instructors should not remove their masks when speaking or presenting.
- If an employee is communicating with a hearing-impaired person, and the employee’s mouth needs to be visible.
- If wearing a mask may introduce a safety hazard into the workplace; check with your DLC for area-specific exceptions.
- If you are alone in a private office or personal space with a closed door.
- For residential-specific exceptions, check with Housing and Residential Services.

- 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 mask. Follow CDC guidance on wearing, cleaning and storing your mask.
- Contact your DLC’s administrative officer for information on supplies of face masks.
- Cloth face masks should be washed and kept for reuse.
- Face mask types do not all provide the same level of filtration; however, when worn properly, they can be effective in reducing the transmission of larger droplets expelled when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. Wearing the most protective mask you can that fits well and that you will wear consistently will help protect you and the people around you, including those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

**IN LABORATORIES**

- Face masks **must be worn at all times** by anyone in a lab.

Exceptions include:
- Anyone with a disability, medical condition, or trouble breathing who has explicit approval from the MIT Disabilities Services and Medical Leaves Office (DSMLO) (more information available here).
- If an employee is in need of medical services that require the temporary removal of the face mask.
Policy Statement: Gloves, Face Masks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

February 10, 2022

- If an employee is communicating with a hearing-impaired person, and the employee’s mouth needs to be visible.
- If wearing a mask may introduce a safety hazard into the workplace; check with your DLC for area-specific exceptions.

- It is acceptable to wear the same face mask that you arrived with into the lab and acceptable to leave the lab with the same face mask, provided it is not contaminated with hazardous materials and has not become damaged.

- Experiments that did not require an N95 respirator prior to the COVID-19 pandemic do not require one now.

- It is acceptable to continue using surgical masks or N95 respirators if they 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 masks during work in BL2+ containment.

- If an experiment previously posed no risk of exposure to hazardous materials when performed without any face mask, there is no additional risk of contaminating the face mask from the same experiment now.

- The highest risk of contamination comes from touching the face mask 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 mask.

- The use of engineering controls (such as a fume hood or biosafety cabinet) would also protect the user and face mask from possible contamination.

- Use of face masks should be carefully reviewed by lab managers and EHS in cases where flames or heat sources are used or when straps could get caught in equipment. Some experiments involving flammable and pyrophoric chemicals may require a flame-resistant face mask as determined through a risk assessment with the PI or DLC. Please contact EHS (environment@mit.edu) for assistance making this determination.

- **Gloves and gowns:**
  - 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.

- **Sharing of PPE** (including lab coats, safety glasses, face shields, and 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.
Policy Statement: Gloves, Face Masks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
February 10, 2022

Please contact EHS (environment@mit.edu) if you have questions about PPE decontamination.