

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

May 2, 2022



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

- Wearing well-fitted face masks, such as [masks recommended by the CDC](#), is **optional indoors** on campus, except in [specific spaces](#) where the Commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to require face masks, including at MIT Medical (including testing facilities). Individuals who are unvaccinated or not up to date with their vaccinations are strongly encouraged to continue to wear masks when indoors.
- Public health experts continue to emphasize the protective value of face masks, especially for those who are immunocompromised or medically vulnerable; those who have loved ones in these categories; and family members of children who are not yet vaccinated. 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. 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.
- Face masks remain 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 when using one.](#)
- Contact your DLC's administrative officer for information on supplies of face masks.
- Cloth face masks should be washed and kept for reuse.

## IN LABORATORIES

- Wearing face masks for COVID protection is **optional** in laboratories. For individuals who are opting to wear a face mask:
  - 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

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contaminated with hazardous materials and has not become damaged. Surgical masks should be used in lieu of cloth face masks during work in BL2+ containment.

- Experiments that did not require an N95 respirator prior to the COVID-19 pandemic do not require one now.
- Regardless of the pandemic, surgical masks or N95 respirators continue to be required in certain situations and research areas if they are necessary 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.
- 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](mailto: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. Please contact EHS ([environment@mit.edu](mailto:environment@mit.edu)) if you have questions about PPE decontamination.