



March 13 CMS Issues Key Protective Mask Guidance for Healthcare Workers

MESH FLU WATCH

Threat Assessment

"Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) took additional action to ensure America's healthcare workers are prepared to fight the spread of Novel Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). Specifically, CMS sent a [memorandum](#) to State Survey Agencies (SAs), which are responsible for inspecting nursing homes and other healthcare facilities serving Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. The memo clarifies the application of CMS policies in light of recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidance expanding the types of facemasks healthcare workers may use in situations involving COVID-19 and other respiratory infections. These are proactive steps to take as part of the White House Task Force's efforts to ensure a maximum supply of facemasks and respirators are available to enable healthcare providers to safely treat patients without exposing themselves or others to COVID-19.

To help reduce burden on healthcare facilities at this time, the CMS memo implements [CDC guidance](#) by stating that facemasks, which protect the wearer from splashes and sprays, are an acceptable temporary alternative to respirators, which filter the air, for most medical services until demand for respirators lessens.

Additionally, the FDA [approved a CDC request for an emergency use authorization \(EUA\)](#) to allow healthcare workers to use certain industrial respirators during the COVID-19 outbreak in healthcare settings. The FDA concluded that respirators approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), but not currently meeting the FDA's requirements, may be effective in preventing healthcare workers from airborne exposure to serious or life-threatening disease, including COVID-19. This FDA approval allows healthcare personnel to use the NIOSH-approved respirators not currently regulated by the FDA. As a result, in addition to N95 respirator masks, healthcare personnel have other masks at their disposal in order to safely treat patients without exposing themselves or others to COVID-19"

[\(CMS\)](#)

Action Steps:

1. To keep up with the important work CMS is doing in response to COVID-19, please visit the [Current Emergencies Website](#).
2. CMS delivered guidance on the screening, treatment and transfer procedures healthcare workers must follow when interacting with patients to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a hospice setting. CMS also issued additional guidance specific to nursing homes to help control and prevent the spread of the virus. [\(CMS\)](#)
3. CMS published guidance to hospitals with emergency departments (EDs) on patient screening, treatment and transfer requirements to prevent the spread of infectious disease and illness, including COVID-19. Medicare-participating hospitals are to follow both CDC guidance for infection control and Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) requirements. [\(CMS\)](#)

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Office phone: 317.630.7363, Pager: 317.310.6762, Email: MESHintel@meshcoalition.org

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