

CDC Updates Guidelines for Mask Wearing by Health Care Providers(HCP) in the Clinical Setting

On **September 23, 2022**, the CDC provided interim updates to infection prevention and control recommendations for the COVID-19 pandemic period. These updates included information related to several topics, one of which was guidelines for mask wearing by HCP in the clinical setting. If you are interested in reading the entire article, please visit [here](#) to read the full report.

The following is a summary of those changes related to mask wearing. This summary will also review the difference between **Community Transmission** and **Community Level**, which partially dictates mask wearing in the clinical setting.

Prior to September 23, 2022:

- Guidelines recommended wearing masks at all times, whether it was in the exam room, restroom for patients/families, weigh station, or any location in the presence of patients/families.
- For staff-only areas, the recommendation was to wear mask in those areas (billing office, reception area, triage nurse area, etc.) if **Community Transmission** was high.

As of September 23, 2022:

- HCPs should wear masks at all times in patient care areas if **Community Transmission** is high.
- HCPs should also wear masks in staff-only areas if **Community Levels** are high.

How to Differentiate between Community Transmission and Community Levels:

- These are two related, but different county level metrics
 - **Community Transmission**
 - For HCPs this is a 4-tiered color coded classification system.
 - The question to ask is **“What is the incidence of COVID-19 in my area?”** based on positive tests and new diagnoses.
 - High – Red 
 - Substantial – Orange 
 - Moderate – Yellow 
 - Low – Blue 
 - **Community Levels**
 - For the general public and social events, this is a 3-tiered color coded classification system.
 - The question to ask is **“How severe is COVID-19 in my area?”** based on number of hospital admissions, the number of ICU admissions, and the length of stay for those hospitalized.
 - High – Orange 
 - Medium – Yellow 
 - Low – Green 

To find more information on these two classifications, visit <https://cdc.gov-data-tracker/#county-view>. Select the “Data Type” dropdown and alternate between COVID-19 Community Levels and Community Transmission.

Again, it should be noted that these two measures are different but related. Please visit cdc.gov for more information.