



**CDC recommends** that the general public wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. In response to this CDC guidance, **everyone entering UH biological laboratories, regardless of their role, must follow Universal Mask precautions.** Unlike the CDC guidance for the general public, which recommends cloth facemasks, UH personnel will be provided a variety of different styles of facemasks or respirator for the specific biological procedures that requires one. Any style of facemask provided by the University must meet the CDC's and OSHA's performance requirements.

Cloth masks may not be appropriate in some work environments. They cannot be adequately decontaminated, and therefore, may not be worn in environments where the mask may become contaminated by infectious materials or other hazardous substances.

- o Do not wear a cloth face covering if it can be entangled in machinery.
- o Do not wear a cloth face covering when using flammable materials.
- o Disposable surgical masks (not cloth face coverings) that are liquid resistant should be worn in labs at biosafety level 2 and higher, patient care areas and clean rooms.

### **Working in a Laboratory at Biological Safety Level 1, 2 or Biological Safety Level 2 enhanced lab.**

Wear a CDC compliant, 2-ply cotton cloth mask while traveling to the lab and change into dedicated surgical or other mask for patient specimen processing or other biological material manipulation procedures. Store your cloth mask as described in Universal Mask Precautions. In most circumstances, other masks such as surgical masks and N-95 respirators, may be required for biological procedures requiring biological inhalation protection. There must be written SOP for decontamination of grossly contaminated mask/respirators.

Once the procedure is completed and you are leaving the lab, wash your hands, remove the mask or respirator, and dispose of them as biological waste. Wash hands again and don on cloth mask as you leave the lab.

### **Entering a Vivarium**

Wear CDC compliant 2-ply cotton cloth mask or another mask to the vivarium. Change into an AVS provided surgical mask. Store your mask as described in Universal Mask Precautions (preferably a paper bag).

Wear required vivarium attire.

### **Mask Removal/Storage (Flat Masks, including cloth)**

- Wash hands and doff off mask
- Carefully fold so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage
- The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag. Do not use plastic.
- Label the paper bag with your name.
- Perform hand hygiene (wash with soap and water or use hand sanitizer) after handling mask.

Please contact the Biosafety Office with any questions on this guidance.

[biosafe@hawaii.edu](mailto:biosafe@hawaii.edu)

# Face Coverings in UH Labs

As a public health measure to combat the spread of COVID-19, face coverings\* are required **as set forth in UH Personal Safety Practices**. This flowchart provides guidance regarding some common concerns related to wearing face coverings in UH Mānoa labs.

START

Do you have any medical concerns that may preclude your use of face coverings in any situation (not just in lab)?

YES

Submit a request for a reasonable accommodation ([EEO/AA](#) for employees and [KOKUA Office](#) for students). Establish a plan for keeping yourself and others around you safe. Alternatives to face coverings may include the use of face shields which may not be as protective against aerosols for the wearer or as source control for others and should be used in connection with other controls such as increased physical distancing.

NO

Do you work with volatile hazardous chemicals, hazardous dusts, processes that generate metal fumes, procedures that generate biohazardous aerosols, or radioactive materials that can be aerosolized/volatilized?

NO

There should not be an appreciable risk of face covering contamination under standard safe practices for lab work. Wear a face covering and keep a spare on hand in case of spills or splashes.

YES

Consult [UH Biosafety](#) and/or [UH Radiation Safety](#), on appropriate face coverings as special precautions may be necessary.

Do you work with open flames, pyrophoric materials, or large quantities of flammables?

YES

Do not wear face coverings made of synthetic polymers or elastics (note that most surgical masks are made of polypropylene). **CONSIDER PURCHASING EITHER FR OR NATURAL FIBER CLOTH MASKS.**

NO

Outside of overt spills or splashes, does performing this work under standard safe lab practices (e.g. use of a fume hood or biosafety cabinet) pose a routine risk of contaminating the face covering?

NO

Use of a face covering in lab is not expected to introduce an additional health and safety risk. Wear a face covering and keep a spare on hand in case of spills or splashes.

YES

Are you normally [required to wear respiratory protection](#) such as an N95 respirator when performing this work?

YES

Wear your PPE as assigned. Avoid N95s with exhalation valves as they do not serve as a means of source control for others. Note: N95's should be reserved for medical workers and those assigned to do so. Using one a voluntary basis requires being provided OSHA's [Appendix D](#).

NO

Continue to wear face covering as per [UH Personal Safety Practices](#). Contact [EHSO](#) to discuss any concerns.

\* Face coverings means a cloth, paper, or disposable face covering that covers the nose and the mouth. More information can be found in our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).