

December 18, 2024

Covid-19 Policy – Masking Update

Frequently asked questions

Why is Northwest Kidney Centers returning to mandatory masking in patient care areas?

NKC is monitoring respiratory virus transmissions (Covid-19, influenza, RSV) that result in emergency department visits within King County. As of Nov. 30, 2024, RSV has met the alert threshold in King County. This indicates respiratory virus spread is increasing, prompting NKC to reinstate universal masking in patient care areas of our clinics.

When will these changes go into effect?

The masking requirement will go into effect on December 23, 2024.

Is this change similar to what other healthcare organizations in the region are doing regarding masking?

Yes, other healthcare organizations are reinstating universal masking mandates based off the increase in respiratory virus transmissions.

Who will be required to wear a mask at NKC?

Masking will be required for ALL staff and patients in patient care areas.

Do I still need to wear eye protection when in the patient care area?

Eye protection will be required for initiation of treatment and ending treatment. Eye protection is also required when there is an increased risk of blood exposure.

What if I work in a clinic outside of King County?

We're taking an organizational approach on how to respond to respiratory viruses (Covid-19, influenza, RSV); therefore, changes to the policy apply to all NKC outpatient dialysis clinics.

Are we still going to do the annual respirator mask fit testing for staff?

Yes, it's an OSHA requirement, so we will continue fit testing.

Future of masking mandates

Will the universal masking mandate be required indefinitely?

No, we will continue to monitor the King County Respiratory Virus dashboard. Once it is confirmed all three respiratory viruses (Covid, Influenza, RSV) are below the alert threshold, we will reassess the need for universal masking in our patient care areas.

Patient communication

How are patients being notified of these changes?

We've drafted a patient letter and translated it into Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Khmer (Cambodian). The clinics will distribute this letter to all patients during treatment.

Additional information

Who do I contact if I have questions?

Please send an email to InfectionPreventionTeam@nwkidney.org.

Where can I find the Covid-19 policy?

It's posted on K-Net, under the Infection Prevention tab.