

[Home](#) > [Resources](#) > [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) > [Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) > [Question & Answer](#)

TOP

**What are the guidelines for attending faculty members supervising students to change masks between patients? Please advise. Thank you.**

The 2003 CDC guidelines for infection control in dentistry does not provide a separate recommendation for how often faculty in academic settings should change masks. The guidelines may be accessed at this link:

<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5217.pdf> <sup>1</sup>

These guidelines states in part:

*A surgical mask that covers both the nose and mouth and protective eyewear with solid side shields or a face shield should be worn by DHCP during procedures and patient-care activities likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood or body fluids. Protective eyewear for patients shields their eyes from spatter or debris generated during dental procedures. A surgical mask protects against microorganisms generated by the wearer, with >95% bacterial filtration efficiency, and also protects DHCP from large-particle droplet spatter that might contain bloodborne pathogens or other infectious microorganisms (173). The mask's outer surface can become contaminated with infectious droplets from spray of oral fluids or from touching the mask with contaminated fingers. Also, when a mask becomes wet from exhaled moist air, the resistance to airflow through the mask increases, causing more airflow to pass around edges of the mask. If the mask becomes wet, it should be changed between patients or even during patient treatment, when possible (2,174). <sup>1</sup>*

The CDC Division of Oral Health states the following on its website:

*Personal Protective Equipment*

*What is the purpose of personal protective equipment (PPE)?*

*PPE are special coverings designed to protect dental health care personnel (DHCP) from exposure to or contact with infectious agents. These include gloves, face masks, protective eyewear, face shields, and protective clothing (e.g., reusable or disposable gown, jacket, lab coat). PPE can also prevent microorganisms from spreading from DHCP to patients. For guidance on how to choose and use PPE in health care settings, see CDC's Protecting Healthcare Personnel.*

*When should a surgical mask be worn?*

*Dental health care personnel should wear a surgical mask that covers both their nose and mouth during procedures that are likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood or body fluids and while manually cleaning instruments. A surgical mask also protects the patient from microorganisms generated by the wearer. When a surgical mask is used, it should be changed between patients or during patient treatment if it becomes wet. <sup>2</sup>*

This information can be accessed at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/faqs/personal-protective-equipment.html> <sup>2</sup>

## Resources

1) Kohn WG, Collins AS, Cleveland JL, Harte JA, Eklund KJ, Malvitz DM, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Guidelines for infection control in dental health-care settings—2003. MMWR Recomm Rep 2003;52(RR-17):1-61. <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr5217.pdf> Accessed on March 2, 2020.

2) US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Personal Protective Equipment. <https://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/faqs/personal-protective-equipment.html> Accessed on March 2, 2020.

[Back To Top](#)

