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Patients, visitors now required to wear face masks at BJC HealthCare facilities

Universal masking policy goes into effect today

(ST. LOUIS – May 6, 2020) -- If you visit a BJC hospital, doctor's office or facility, you will need to wear a face mask starting today.

Designed to reduce community spread of COVID-19, the new policy follows guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and applies to all patients, visitors and employees who enter BJC buildings.

"This additional measure of caution inside our facilities is an important step, especially as we begin to resume some of our normal operations," says Hilary Babcock, MD, director of infection prevention at BJC HealthCare and an infectious disease specialist at Washington University School of Medicine. "Many people already use masks when they need to be in public places where social distancing is difficult to maintain."

Children under two-years-old, or anybody with difficulty breathing or who are unable to remove their own mask without assistance should not wear a mask.

Patients are encouraged to wear their own masks to their appointments. Masks can be homemade, or in any format or style available. If a patient doesn't have a personal mask, the BJC location will provide one.

Patients who arrive with respiratory symptoms will be provided a medical-grade isolation mask, as recommended by the CDC.

Visitor restrictions are still in place, but the few visitors who are allowed under exceptions to the policy will also be required to wear a mask.

Caregivers who have direct patient contact are already required to wear medical-grade personal protective equipment (PPE) in accordance with CDC guidelines. Employees who work in offices or who otherwise don't interact with patients will be required to wear cloth or homemade masks.

There is evidence preventive measures including masking and social distancing have helped flatten the curve of the disease. As hospitals prepare to resume operations, these precautions will be critical to maintaining the downward trend of the virus, and keeping our community safe.

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BJC HealthCare

BJC HealthCare is one of the largest nonprofit health care organizations in the United States, delivering services to residents primarily in the greater St. Louis, southern Illinois and mid-Missouri regions. Serving the health care needs of urban, suburban and rural communities, BJC includes 15 hospitals and multiple health service organizations. Services include inpatient and outpatient care, primary care, community health and wellness, workplace health, home health, community mental health, rehabilitation, long-term care and hospice. BJC's nationally recognized academic hospitals, Barnes-Jewish and St. Louis Children's hospitals, are affiliated with Washington University School of Medicine.