

Clinician Update

March 23, 2023

An Update to Masking Requirements for Colleagues at Virtua Hospitals

Virtua Health continually updates its safety protocols in response to the evolving COVID-19 public health crisis. As infection rates and community-transmission levels have steadily decreased, and the severity of COVID-19 illnesses has also notably dissipated, we are now able to downgrade some existing safety measures.

Effective tomorrow, Friday, March 24, colleagues at all Virtua acute care hospitals will only be required to wear a facemask during routine patient-facing encounters. Eye protection will no longer be necessary. The PPE requirements and processes will remain the same as before for colleagues caring for patients placed in isolation for COVID-19.

This means that masks will no longer be required in areas where colleagues otherwise congregate, such as workstations, hallways, meeting rooms, and non-clinical areas.

While many colleagues will welcome this easing of the masking policy, other colleagues may elect to continue masking to their own degree of personal comfort. As a caring culture, we will respect and support any colleague who prefers to continue wearing a mask in non-clinical areas.

We recognize how challenging the last three years have been for everyone. We thank all of you for your steadfastness, compassion, and teamwork throughout every phase of this state of emergency. We will continue to monitor local, national, and global trends and adjust our plans accordingly.

Colleague Health

We continue to request that any colleague experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 take appropriate caution by testing themselves and other members of their household. This will help ensure we maintain a healthy environment within Virtua's care facilities.

Timely and thorough testing will continue to protect our fellow colleagues, visitors, and vulnerable patients from the potential transmission of infection. We will continue to monitor for any potential clusters and outbreaks among our patients—particularly now that we have discontinued universal COVID testing for all patients.

Visitor/Patient Requirements

We continue to require that visitors remain masked when spending time with patients. Facemasks are required in patient rooms, but not in hallways, elevators, lobbies, lounges, and other public areas.

As before, patients are required to mask during encounters with Virtua staff and visitors (if medically able). Patients must also wear a mask when walking through hospital corridors/hallways.

N95 Respirators

Virtua colleagues are required to continue to wear a fit-tested N95 respirator in the following circumstances/areas:

- When indicated by Airborne or Respiratory N95 isolation precaution signage at the patient-room entrance
- During defined aerosol-generating procedures
- If there is concern for exposure to infectious aerosol

Beyond the Hospitals

- **The use of facemasks is now optional for colleagues, patients, and visitors at Virtua/VMG clinical offices—except for those who are experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough, sore throat, etc.), those who have tested positive for COVID in the past 10 days, or those who have had close contact with a COVID-positive person in the past 10 days. Any person with a weakened immune system—such as those receiving treatment for cancer—must also wear a facemask.**
- Virtua Home Health colleagues will continue with masking in patient-facing encounters.
- Virtua joint-venture ambulatory surgical centers and other ambulatory sites will follow a similar policy as outlined above for the hospitals and continue to require facemasks during patient-facing encounters. Patients may be required to participate in screening/testing based on any symptoms they present.

Continued Progress

This is the latest of several policy updates in response to encouraging indications that we are progressing out of the pandemic. Recently, Virtua has also elected to:

- 1) Discontinue universal COVID testing at all facilities
- 2) Discontinue preoperative and pre-procedure testing requirements
- 3) Discontinue universal COVID testing in labor and delivery areas
- 4) Normalize operating room processes
- 5) Facilitate visiting opportunities to hospital patients with active COVID-19

Thank you for all you have done to help us reach this important milestone.

Spring into Practicing Excellence!

The Practicing Excellence platform was created with physicians in mind. But the creators soon realized that all health care workers—regardless of role—can benefit from the tools and teachings. And so, all colleagues will enroll in the *Patient Experience* program, which will run from April through October.

We have been hosting ***Spring into Practicing Excellence Activation Events*** at all five Virtua hospital locations. Here is the remaining schedule:

March 23: Virtua Voorhees and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes

March 29: Virtua Marlton, Mount Holly, Voorhees, Willingboro and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes

March 30: Virtua Marlton, Mount Holly, Voorhees, Willingboro and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes

April 5: Virtua Marlton, Mount Holly, Voorhees, Willingboro and Virtua Our Lady of Lourdes

There's even a special music video Virtua is preparing to celebrate the launch of Practicing Excellence. [Consult this flyer](#) for details on how you and your team can win big by busting a move.

To see how to register your Practicing Excellence account, click [here](#) for last week's *Clinician Update* now posted on Digital 411.

Getting Set for the Best Doctors' Day ever!

Next week is Doctors' Day, the official kickoff to many national health care celebrations. And while we have a lot in store to commemorate the event, let's make it an extra special occasion. We want to celebrate our family of doctors with pictures to remember!

So here's how you can help:

- Share a selfie of you or with your colleagues
- Take a group photo with your team or with your fellow docs
- Share a solo photo in your office, around campus, or at your practice
- Share a story of your favorite doc (besides you) at Virtua, and how they inspire you
- Take a photo of that favorite doc to celebrate them

Click [here](#) to share your photos and words. We'll be sure to post your stories on Virtua's social media channels.

Virtua MedCom:

Coordinating the Logistics for All of Your Patient Transport Needs

Virtua MedCom is our centralized coordination point for all patient transports into and around the Virtua Health System. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, MedCom provides a single-call solution for referring physicians and their staff to transport patients, a process completed by base communicators who have extensive knowledge of all aspects of patient transport.

"As soon as you request a patient transport, dedicated communicators coordinate the transport," said James Newman, VP Patient Logistics. "Know that there is much involved in that, but Virtua MedCom aims to create a seamless experience by managing the logistics of patient transports to get our valued patients from point A to point B. Currently, we coordinate over 225 requests for service per day and our Virtua Medical Transport teams move over 100 patients a day. I can't say enough about the dedicated staff we have in fulfilling that demand."

MedCom is focused on making the critical process of transport efficient and effective for our clinicians, all to the benefit of our patients. It is staffed by communicators who are experienced in processing urgent, emergent, and non-emergent requests for patient transports.

It takes just one phone call for patient transfer coordination and medical transportation dispatch: 6-5-1-1-1. Or from an outside Virtua line, 856-886-5111. To learn more, when on our computer network, simply go to the Vine (now Colleague Corner) and click on the [Virtua Transfer Center button](#).

Quarterly Cardiology Grand Rounds March 29, 7 a.m.

Virtua Cardiology has initiated a Grand Rounds series for clinicians. The inaugural program will be held virtually. Hear Dr. William Lombardi, professor of medicine from the University of Washington, discuss the “Emotional Toll of High-Risk PCI: Effects on Operator Ability to Improve.” For an informational flyer, click [here](#). Click to register [here](#).

Virtua in the News

Rowan-Virtua Medical School Helps Develop Blood Test that Predicts Alzheimer’s

Researchers from Rowan-Virtua School of Osteopathic Medicine and Durin Technologies announced the results of a new blood test that can detect the presence of Alzheimer's disease-related pathology up to 10 years before symptoms arise with a nearly 97% accuracy rate. Their findings appear online ahead of press in the [Journal of Alzheimer's Disease](#). Read more [here](#).

How Patients Are Still Grappling with Effects of Long COVID

Some people continue to experience the effects of COVID-19 for months or even years after the initial illness. In this *NJ Spotlight News* story, Dr. Angela Skrzynski, Virtua family medicine and lead telehealth physician, offered her insights about long COVID and its impact on patients and those around them. Additionally, patient Joy Ezekiel-Gibson spoke of the challenges she continues to overcome and offered hope to other patients and families. Watch [here](#). To learn about Virtua’s Care After COVID program, click [here](#).

Virtua Executive Named a Top Woman Business Influencer

ROI-NJ, a statewide business magazine, has named Lauren Rowinski to its “Women in Business 2023 Influencers” list. The senior vice president, chief legal officer, and corporate secretary for Virtua provides counsel for Virtua’s legal, risk management, and privacy departments. She also provides strategic legal support to Virtua’s CEO, executive leadership team, and board of directors. View her profile page [here](#) and the full Women Business Influencers feature [here](#).

Virtua Leader among Top Digital Chiefs in Health Care

Becker's Hospital Review has recognized Dr. Tarun Kapoor, SVP and chief digital transformation officer, as one of the "35 hospital and health system chief digital officers to know." Dr. Kapoor is leading the expansion of digital technologies to support Virtua's operational essentials. Read [here](#).

Virtua to Participate in Modern Healthcare's Best Places to Work Survey

For many years, Virtua participated in the annual *Philadelphia Business Journal* "Best Places to Work" survey. And we are proud to have earned a spot on that list 16 times thanks to our colleagues' participation and positive feedback.

That is a track record to feel good about. However, WE are an organization that likes to push itself and reach new heights. Therefore, this year we are not participating in the *Philadelphia Business Journal* survey. Instead, we have set our sights for a more ambitious, **national list: *Modern Healthcare's "Best Places to Work."***

In addition to shifting from a regional list to a national list, here's another key difference between the two surveys:

The *Philadelphia Business Journal* invited all colleagues to participate in its survey. *Modern Healthcare* will only send the survey to a random selection of 650 full-time and part-time colleagues. Of that group, **260 must complete the survey for us to be considered.**

The number 260 may seem small, but we still need everyone's support. All Virtua full-time and part-time colleagues should check their email on **Friday, March 31** to see if they've been selected.

The email will come from Surveys@WorkforceRG.com with the subject line: ***Your Voice Counts – Best Places to Work in Healthcare.*** Please do not report it as phishing.

Those who have been selected should promptly complete the survey. Earning a spot on the *Modern Healthcare* list helps signal to the country that Virtua is a desirable place to work and a health system that attracts the best people.

Thank you in advance for your support.

Countdown to Friday's Deadline, March 24 U.S. News Physician Survey of Top Hospitals

Have you voted yet?

If not, please consider recognizing Virtua physicians by including Virtua Health in your vote in the *U.S. News & World Report's* annual Best Hospitals survey. The annual survey, which captures medical specialists' expert opinions on which hospitals provide high-quality referral care in their specialty, ends on **March 24**.

[Last year](#), Virtua Health was recognized as high performing by *US News & World Report*, with Virtua Voorhees Hospital tying for the sixth-best hospital in the state.

Here's how to vote:

1. Go to your account at [Doximity.com](https://www.doximity.com). If you are looking to establish your Doximity profile, just follow the instructions [here](#).
2. Click on the *U.S. News* nomination icon, or search for "*U.S. News Best Hospitals*" in your [Doximity](#) account to submit your nominations.
3. When voting for Best Hospital, select Virtua's hospitals. Note that Virtua Marlton is included with Virtua Voorhees.

Thank you for all you do every day in bringing the best of care to our patients.

Virtua's Mobile Fleet Recognized as Healthy People 2030 Champion

We are pleased to share that Virtua Health has been recognized as a [Healthy People 2030 Champion](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This prestigious honor specifically recognizes Virtua's mobile community health programs, which bring services to underserved communities throughout South Jersey.

As a Healthy People 2030 Champion, Virtua has demonstrated a commitment to helping achieve the Healthy People 2030 vision of a society in which all people can achieve their full potential for health and well-being across their lifespans.

Powered by philanthropy, Virtua's Eat Well Mobile Farmers Market, Eat Well Mobile Grocery Store, Pediatric Mobile Services, and forthcoming Mobile Health and Cancer Screening Unit, are bringing much-needed services to our neighbors in need. We are grateful for all our donors, including colleague donors, who help fuel these highly impactful programs.

To learn more about how our donors are supporting Virtua's mobile community health programs, visit: [GiveToVirtua.org](https://www.givetovirtua.org). To read more about the designation, click [here](#).

Awareness and Recognition

March 26 to April 1 is [LGBTQ+ Health Awareness Week](#) and **Friday, March 31** is [International Transgender Day of Visibility](#). Both awareness events shine a light on the continual pursuit of health equity. At Virtua, our [Pride Primary Care practice in Marlton](#) has welcomed about 400 patients in its first nine months of operation—many of whom are new to Virtua's care network. For further reading, visit the National LGBTQ Task Force's write-up on the [Health Awareness Week](#), GLSEN's Transgender Day of Visibility [resource guide](#) and the American Medical Association's [Health Equity Education Center](#).

Additionally, 75 years after a Universal Declaration of Rights was established, people around the world are observing [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#). Developed in South Africa, this world-wide commitment continues to require action, including reflecting on ways each of us can do our part to ensure no human being encounters discrimination based on race.

Also, as we welcome spring this week, many celebrate the Spring Equinox, Persian New Year—[Nowruz](#) which translates to *New Day*—a two-week festival.

Ramadan Begins This Week

Ramadan begins this week. For 30 days, most Muslims fast daily from dawn to dusk. Muslims recognizing Ramadan will wake up about 90 minutes before sunrise to eat an early breakfast (known as suhoor). After dawn, they refrain from eating and drinking anything (not even water!). Click to read more about understanding [Ramadan and supporting your Muslim colleagues](#).

IDEA

Making Sense of Acronyms Related to Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity

The health care industry is known for its acronyms. Chances are you can think of a handful off the top of your head. We are no different at Virtua. In fact, we came up with an acronym of our own to sum up our commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity for all: IDEA.

IDEA is the focus of a new training module available on the Virtua Learning System. The training defines and distinguishes the acronyms below that are associated with patient demographic information.

- REaL: Race, ethnicity, and language
- SDoH: Social determinants of health
- SGN: Sex, gender, name
- SOGI (pronounced so-gee): Sexual orientation and gender identity

Health systems collect information about our patients' identities for two primary reasons:

- What makes a person distinct matters to us, and it helps us to deliver more personalized care.
- Individual data helps to inform larger trends, ensuring our population-health strategies are rooted in data.

To put it simply: we ask because we care.

In the months ahead, we will share opportunities to explore these concepts further. Click to complete the IDEA training "[Building Our Cultural Competency](#)" on the Virtua Learning System. Additionally, check out the Practicing Excellence tip "[Conveying Respect: Valuing Differences.](#)"

Here for Good—in Sneakers and on Bikes

Virtua is proud to support the fundraising efforts of everyone who wants to make a difference for the families we serve. This spring, three [Virtua Health Community Partners](#) will get their hearts pumping for a good cause.

[Crank the Food Bank](#) is an annual 5K run/walk sponsored by Virtua's nutrition team. **Held this Saturday, March 25** at Virtua Voorhees Hospital, Crank the Food Bank benefits Virtua's [Colleague Markets and Food Farmacy](#).

Lace up your sneakers again on Sunday, June 11 for [Run with the Docs](#)! Virtua Voorhees Hospital is home to this 5K run and 1-mile walk to support our programs for families who have experienced [pregnancy and infancy loss](#).

If cycling is your speed, check out [Propel 100](#). Featuring routes for riders of all skill levels, Propel 100 takes place Saturday, June 24 and benefits [oncology services at Virtua](#). We have 10 free registrations for Virtua colleagues—contact the Office of Philanthropy at 856-355-0830 to claim one!