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VA relaxes masking requirements at medical facilities

WASHINGTON, DC — Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced it has relaxed the masking requirement at VA medical facilities. This update ensures the safety of Veterans while accommodating individual masking preferences and aligning with CDC guidelines.

Moving forward, VA will base its masking guidelines on the [VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels](#) (low, medium, and high) and healthcare facilities' conditions. When health protection levels are high, masking will remain required. However, when health protection levels are low or medium, medical center leadership will conduct a facility risk assessment to determine if it is appropriate for masking to be optional in certain areas at their facility. Previously, masking had been required at all times in VA medical facilities, regardless of health protection levels.

"This new policy will ensure the safety of Veterans and VA health care providers, while accommodating individual masking preferences," said **Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal**. "We're trying to be as open as possible to Veteran and clinician and staff preferences alike, while aligning with CDC guidelines."

Regardless of health protection level or healthcare facility conditions, masking will still be required in high-risk areas such as chemotherapy units, acute inpatient medical/surgical units, intensive care units, post-transplant units, dialysis units, etc. Masking will also be required at all times for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or other viral respiratory infections.

VHA will monitor any changes to CDC guidelines and update VHA COVID-19 guidelines as necessary.

Visit www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/ for more information regarding the VHA COVID-19 Health Protection Levels.

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