Frequently Asked Questions about...

Droplet Precautions (for care providers)

Q. What do droplet precautions require?
A. Droplet precautions require wearing a face mask (also called a surgical mask) when in a room with a person who has a respiratory infection. These precautions are used in addition to standard precautions, which include the use of a face shield/goggles as well as gown and gloves if contact with blood/body fluids is possible.

Q. When should I use droplet precautions?
A. Use droplet precautions whenever you are in a room with a patient who is infected with a virus or bacterium that is transmissible via the droplets of mucus and saliva. These droplets are generated when a patient coughs, sneezes, or talks.

Q. What kind of infections can be spread by droplets?
A. The most common are influenza and other respiratory viruses like the common cold. A few bacteria, including pertussis (whooping cough), meningococcus, and streptococcus, are also transmitted by droplets.

Q. Where can I find a list of the viruses and bacteria for which droplet precautions are recommended?

Q. What else should I do to prevent the spread of respiratory infections?
A. Follow instructions when your patients are placed on droplet precautions. Other prevention measures include seasonal influenza vaccination, frequent hand washing at home and work, and staying at home from work if you become ill.

Contact your local health department if you have additional questions about droplet precautions.