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AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

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Statement on PPE Shortages during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) recognizes that many health care facilities are facing shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE), including face masks, gowns, and respirators. The ACS believes it is essential that surgeons, nurses, anesthesiologists, and other health care personnel be able to speak freely, without fear of retribution, as they seek to find a solution to accessing PPE. We advise surgeons to speak with their institutional leadership on these matters and to be able to direct any concerns to the ACS, with the goal of protecting themselves and their colleagues.

The Joint Commission has released a [statement](#) supporting the use of standard face masks and respirators provided from home when health care facilities cannot provide access to PPE that is commensurate with the risk to which health care personnel are exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Where masks or respirators are recommended, the ACS maintains that surgeons should have access to and latitude to wear these masks at their sole discretion. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also has released a [document](#) that offers a series of strategies or options to optimize supplies of disposable N95 filtering facepiece respirators.

The ACS strongly supports the ability of surgeons to use their own masks or PPE, but this option does not obviate the hospital's responsibility to provide adequate PPE to all their health care workers. In these extraordinary times, the ACS encourages institutions to adapt and be flexible so that health care personnel continue to feel safe; The Joint Commission guidelines are a reasonable starting point.