

# Notification to Participants About Face Masks in Research Laboratories

## Background

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The [Iowa Board of Regents](#) guidance on face masks for regent universities indicates that face masks are optional in most campus settings. However, face masks can be required in research laboratories at the discretion of the principal investigator or lab supervisor. See [COVID-19: Moving Forward](#) for details, current information, and [messaging materials](#).

The Iowa State IRB recommends informing research participants if they will be required to wear face coverings in advance of their study visit(s). This document describes how researchers should proceed if they wish to add mask requirements to IRB-approved recruitment messages.

## IRB Approval of Advance Notification to Research Participants

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On August 17, 2021, the convened IRB approved adding one of the following statements to IRB-approved recruitment messages:

- *Face masks are required in the research lab. Please bring your own, or we will provide one for you.*
- *You will need to wear a face mask during the study visit(s). Please bring your own, or we will provide one for you.*

### Limitations

This approval applies only to IRB protocols reviewed by the Iowa State IRB. The Iowa State IRB does not have the authority to authorize changes to protocols under the oversight of an external (non-ISU IRB). Researchers should consult the reviewing IRB for guidance.

## Guidance

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### Modifying IRB-Approved Protocols and Recruitment Materials

Federal regulations and IRB policy require IRB review before changes to approved non-exempt research are implemented. The notification practices outlined above are IRB-approved and therefore may be implemented by researchers *without submitting modification applications for review*.

### Informed Consent

Informed consent forms or scripts should NOT be revised to include mask requirements, since these requirements are not directly related to research procedures.

## Other Notification Options

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Not all communications with research participants require IRB review (e.g., logistical/scheduling communication, etc.). Mask requirements may be included in those communications if desired.

Alternatively, researchers may share mask requirements in stand-alone communications. These communications do not require IRB review.

Researchers are advised to use Iowa State's Cyclone Cares COVID-19 [messaging materials](#) when appropriate.

### Document History

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*Created/Approved: 8/17/2021*

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