Personal Protective Equipment, Respiratory Hygiene/Cough Etiquette - FAQs

1. How often do I have to change my mask?
   • A new face mask must be used for each patient; face masks are single-use devices.
   • Facemasks are not intended to be used more than once. If your mask is damaged or soiled, or if breathing through the mask becomes difficult, you should remove the facemask, discard it safely, and replace it with a new one. To safely discard your mask, place it in a plastic bag and put it in the trash. Wash your hands after handling the used mask.

Reference:
Food and Drug Administration
https://www.fda.gov/medicaldevices/productsandmedicalprocedures/generalhospitaldevicesandsupplies/personalprotectiveequipment/ucm055977.htm

2. When I am required to wear heavy-duty utility gloves during operatory reprocessing?
   • Yes. According to OSHA, gloves shall be worn when it can be reasonably anticipated that the employee may have hand contact with blood, other potentially infectious materials, mucous membranes, and non-intact skin; and when handling or touching contaminated items or surfaces. Utility gloves, often called "rubber" gloves, such as those which may be used for housekeeping chores, are of more substantial construction than surgical or examination gloves.
   • Utility gloves may be decontaminated for re-use if the integrity of the glove is not compromised. However, they must be discarded if they are cracked, peeling, torn, punctured, or exhibit other signs of deterioration or when their ability to function as a barrier is compromised.

Reference:
OSAP FAQs referring to OSHA regs at https://www.osap.org/page/FAQ_PPE_Gloves#shouldthegloves

3. Can I take my clinic gown home to launder if I wash it separately in hot water?
   • NO – laundering of PPE is the responsibility of the employer.

Reference:
1910.1030(d)(3)(iv)
The employer shall clean, launder, and dispose of personal protective equipment required by paragraphs (d) and (e) of this standard, at no cost to the employee.