



**\*Recent updates are highlighted**

## Talking points for staff to use with patients/residents:

- In a continued effort to protect everyone from exposure to, and spread of COVID-19, health care workforce will be required to wear a medical mask at all times inside any SHA facility, unless eating and/or drinking. This includes public/common areas (e.g., elevators, hallways, lobbies, cafeterias/food court areas), meeting rooms and break rooms..
- When you are in your room, you have enough distance and space around you to keep you protected and your care staff will already be wearing a medical mask, so you do not need to wear one.
- If you are in a waiting area or you need to go for a test/procedure, you will be asked you to put on a medical mask to protect others.
- We are trying to limit the number of people walking around the unit/facility so please use your call bell or speak to a member of your care team if you need assistance.

## Information for health care workforce about medical mask use

- Please review the [Continuous and Extended personal protective equipment \(PPE\) Use Guidelines](#) for detailed information.
- Health care workforce will be required to wear a medical mask at all times inside any SHA building and facility, unless eating and/or drinking. This includes public/common areas (e.g., elevators, hallways, lobbies, cafeterias/food court areas), meeting rooms and break rooms.
- Where applicable, health care workforce will follow Public Health Orders for masking requirements. In the event the Public Health Order conflicts with the Expanded Continuous Masking Guidelines, the health care workforce will follow the more stringent guidelines (Refer to the most current [Public Health Order](#))
- Cloth masks are not approved for use in SHA operated facilities.
- Medical masks can be used for multiple patient/resident interactions including patients on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions (see instructions for Droplet-Contact Plus rooms below).
- Medical masks need to be changed when wet, damaged or soiled. Discard when taking scheduled breaks and at the end of the shift.
- Questions related to the PPE requirements may be directed to your manager or supervisor. If your manager or supervisor is not able to resolve your question, they will consult with the appropriate infection prevention and control practitioner.

## Health care workforce that work in administrative areas (personal office/workstation):

- Health care workforce may consider working from home as per the SHA remote work process.
- Health care workforce who work in administrative areas with no patient contact and who can consistently and reliably maintain two metre physical distancing from others are exempt from wearing a medical mask while in their office/workstation. However, they must wear a medical mask on entry to the facility and whenever they leave their office/workstation.

## Entering the room of a patient on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions:

- Health care workforce should NOT remove their medical mask prior to entering the room.
- Additional PPE should be put on (gown, gloves, eye protection) prior to entering.
- When leaving the room,
  - gown and gloves should be removed;
  - Keep medical mask on (unless wet, damaged or soiled);



- Keep eye protection on if staff or physician will be entering rooms of additional patients on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions; and
- Discard/clean eye protection and perform hand hygiene after all Droplet-Contact Plus patient interactions have been completed.

### **Entering the room of a patient on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions where Aerosol-Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP) is being/has been performed:**

- Health care workforce should remove and discard their medical mask prior to entering the room in order to don an N95 respirator.
- Health care workforce should put on the required personal protective equipment (gown, gloves, eye protection and N95 respirator).
- When leaving the room, the gown and gloves should be removed.
- If the staff or physician will be entering rooms of additional patients on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions where AGMP is being/has been performed prior to leaving the clinical area, the N95 respirator and eye protection should be left on.
- The N95 respirator and eye protection should be discarded and hand hygiene performed only after all interactions with patients requiring an AGMP have been completed.

### **What to know about wearing medical masks for extended periods of time:**

- Avoid touching the medical mask while wearing it.
- Remove the medical mask using the appropriate technique; do not touch the front of the medical mask.
- After removal or whenever a used medical mask is inadvertently touched, clean hands using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Do not pull the medical mask off and put around your chin, neck or forehead, as this will increase the risk of self-contamination.
- Make sure the medical mask is covering both your mouth and your nose.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1) **UPDATED** Why is the SHA implementing this change?

These enhanced measures, in combination with existing infection prevention and control measures (i.e. physical distancing, point of care risk assessment (PCRA), hand hygiene, environmental cleaning/disinfection, staying home if you are ill, etc.) are guided by the following principles:

- 1) Prevention of transmission from staff and/or physicians who may be asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic carriers of the virus to our most vulnerable population (i.e. patients/residents/clients).
- 2) Prevention of transmission from patients/residents/clients who may be asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic carriers of the virus to staff and/or physicians.
- 3) Conservation of PPE needed by our healthcare providers that enable them to safely practice according to the above principles.

Remember: Wearing a mask is an additional measure we have in place in our health care facilities to protect everyone. It does not replace the need to physical distance from others.

### 2) **UPDATED** Who needs to wear a medical mask?

Applying the key principle of protecting our most vulnerable population, health care workforce will be required to wear a medical mask at all times inside any SHA building and facility, unless eating and/or drinking. This includes public/common areas (e.g., elevators, hallways, lobbies, cafeterias/food court areas), meeting rooms and break rooms. In addition, patients and family member/support person entering our facilities will be required to wear a medical mask according to [Masking Guidelines for Patients/Residents/Clients](#) and [Masking and PPE Guidelines for Family Member and Support Person](#).

### 3) **UPDATED** Where is medical masking required?

Medical masking is required on entry to and inside all SHA facilities, including public/common areas (e.g., elevators, hallways, lobbies, cafeterias/food court areas), meeting rooms and break rooms.

### 4) **UPDATED** Are there any exceptions/times when medical masks are not required?

Medical masks are not required:

- For health care workforce who work in administrative areas (i.e. personal office/workstation) with no patient contact and where two metres physical distancing can be consistently and reliably maintained
- When eating or drinking in designated areas (remember to always maintain two metre physical distancing from others and consider moving to another location if this is not possible)

### 5) How do I properly wear a medical mask?

Generally, there are three things you should look for to ensure your medical mask fits correctly:

1. The aluminum nose piece is at the top.
2. The white (or smoothest side) is on the inside against the wearer's skin – the colour always faces out
3. The pleats fall downwards and away from the nose (called a "waterfall" pleat)

This is a video to demonstrate proper donning and doffing of an ear loop medical mask

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx4tpwnSrbk&feature=youtu.be>



## 6) How can I hydrate safely while wearing a medical mask?

Efforts should be made to take hydration breaks during regularly scheduled breaks in an effort to conserve PPE use. Medical masks must be discarded and replaced once removed. Remember to always perform hand hygiene after you remove your medical mask.

## 7) **UPDATED** How do I eat/drink while wearing a medical mask?

Eating or drinking should occur in designated\* areas only. When eating/drinking staff should:

- Dispose of the medical mask
- Perform hand hygiene
- Maintain physical distancing at all times (Consider eating/drinking in another location if physical distancing is not possible)
- Put on a new medical mask before returning to work

\*Eating and/or drinking should not occur in areas where infectious materials, hazardous chemicals or hazardous drugs are used, handled or stored. Examples include, but are not limited to: nursing stations, patient care areas, operating and procedure rooms, labs, pharmacies, reprocessing areas, areas with chemicals such as maintenance or cleaning closets/carts or any other areas with infectious or hazardous materials.

## 8) **UPDATED** Do I need to wear a medical mask when I am in a break room/staff room?

Yes. There is an extremely high-risk for transmission of COVID-19 in small, enclosed spaces such as break rooms or other staff common areas. A medical mask is required to be worn at all times in these spaces, unless you are eating and/or drinking. When removing your medical mask to eat and/or drink, remember to maintain two metre physical distancing at all times from other staff.

## 9) What do I do with the medical mask when I take my breaks? Can I save it and re-use it after?

Properly remove the medical mask, discard, perform hand hygiene and put on a new one when you return from your break. The re-use of medical masks is NOT encouraged at this time due to the risk of self-contamination if the process of safely doffing, storing, and re-donning is not followed carefully. Should this direction change in the future, appropriate training materials related to safe medical mask re-use will be provided.

## 10) **UPDATED** Do I need to wear a medical mask if I don't work in a clinical area/facility (e.g. administrative, support or corporate staff with no direct or indirect patient/resident/client interaction)?

Yes. Health care workforce will be required to wear a medical mask on entry to and while travelling through all areas of the SHA facility, including public/common areas, meeting rooms and break rooms, unless eating and/or drinking.

## 11) **NEW** If I work behind Plexiglas, do I need to wear a medical mask?

Yes. We are now asking health care workforce to wear a medical mask at all times, even if they are working behind Plexiglas or other physical barrier. While the Plexiglas provides a barrier if someone coughs or sneezes, it does not replace the need to follow the Expanded Continuous Masking Guidelines. Medical masks are necessary to protect ourselves, our patients and our co-workers.

## 12) **UPDATED** Do I need to wear a medical mask while I'm at my workstation/office that is located in an administrative area?

If you are working in an administrative area with no patient contact and two metre physical distancing can be reliably and consistently maintained, then you do not require a medical mask while in your workspace. However, if you are working in an area where physical distancing cannot be maintained, a



medical mask must be worn throughout your shift. In addition, whenever leaving your office/workstation, you will be required to put on a medical mask.

**13) UPDATED Do I need to wear my medical mask in a clinical care area/facility when there are no patients or clients currently in the space (e.g., prior to clients arriving at a testing/assessment site for the day, between immunization appointments, etc.)?**

Yes. Following the expanded continuous masking guidelines, health care workforce are required to wear a mask at all times, regardless whether patients or clients are present. Once a medical mask has been donned at the beginning of the shift, the continuous and extended use guidelines would apply (i.e. change only when wet, damaged or soiled, when going on a scheduled break and at end of shift) in an effort to conserve PPE (Principle 3)

**14) UPDATED Do I need to wear a medical mask while in common areas (e.g. hallways, lobbies, cafeterias, etc.)?**

Yes. Health care workforce will be required to wear a medical mask at all times, including in public/common areas, meeting rooms and break rooms. The resumption of health care services and changes to our family member/support person guidelines has resulted in an increase in the number of people entering our facilities. With this in mind, the ability to maintain physical distancing in these areas has becoming increasingly challenging and in some areas no longer possible.

**15) UPDATED Where/when will I be provided with a medical mask?**

Health care workforce will be provided with a medical mask at entryways with screening stations. Alternatively, managers, supervisors or another designated point person in the unit/facility will have access to a supply of medical masks that can be provided when new medical masks are necessary.

**16) NEW Can I wear my own non-medical mask (cloth) mask inside SHA facilities?**

No. Cloth masks are not approved for use in SHA operated facilities. The Public Health Agency of Canada has issued guidance on the material, structure and fit of non-medical (cloth) masks.<sup>1</sup> We know the range of styles, materials and design of cloth masks vary significantly as does their performance. As such, it is difficult to ensure that the cloth masks worn in our health care facilities will meet these criteria. For the added protection of our staff, physicians, patients, residents and clients, we will continue to wear medical masks only in our health care facilities.

**17) UPDATED If I am wearing my own medical mask on entry to the facility, can I continue to wear it when I am working?**

No. Health care workforce must wear a facility-provided medical mask. If they arrive to work with their own personal medical mask, they must remove it and replace it with a facility-provided one.

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<sup>1</sup> A non-medical mask should:

- be made of at least 3 layers
  - 2 layers should be tightly woven material fabric, such as cotton or linen
  - the third (middle) layer should be a filter-type fabric, such as non-woven polypropylene fabric
- be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose, mouth and chin without gaping
- allow for easy breathing
- fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops
- be comfortable and not require frequent adjustments
- be changed as soon as possible if damp or dirty
- maintain its shape after washing and drying

**18) UPDATED When should I change my medical mask?**

Medical masks need to be changed when wet, damaged or soiled. Discard when taking scheduled breaks and at the end of the shift.

**19) Do I need to change my medical mask if I go into a room with someone on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions (or rooms of patients/residents on other Additional Precautions)?**

No. You can continue to wear the same medical mask between patients/residents/clients. Gowns and gloves should be removed and changed between patients. Eye protection and medical masks should continue to be worn. The eye protection can be cleaned/discarded after all interactions with patients on Droplet-Contact Plus precautions are completed.

**20) What do I do if I experience allergies, skin integrity, or other issues impacting my ability to wear a medical mask for an extended period of time?**

Please report these issues to your manager and work through the existing processes for seeking guidance from OH&S/Employee Health and/or the accommodations process.

**21) NEW Can I wear a non-medical (cloth) mask under my medical mask?**

No. There is no clear guidance or process for the proper steps for donning and doffing multiple masks. As such, this may lead to an increased risk of self-contamination. In addition, wearing a cloth mask under a medical mask may alter the fit and therefore not provide adequate coverage of the mouth and nose.

**22) UPDATED Can a face shield or clear mask be used as a substitute to wearing a medical mask?**

No. Only medical masks are acceptable for use as source control. To date, there is not enough evidence to support that face shields alone are effective as source control. For more information:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/main/2020/07/covid-19-face-shields-source-control.pdf?la=en>

\*Please note there are very specific instances when a contoured face shield or clear mask may be used.

Refer to [Infection Prevention and Control Guidelines Addressing Patient\\* Challenges With HCW Continuous Mask Use](#) for more information. The guidelines provided in this document are intended to be used in conjunction with and are not meant to replace the Expanded Continuous Mask Use Guidelines.

**23) Do I need to wear a medical mask when I am using the gym/wellness facility located in an SHA building?**

A gym/wellness facility is considered to be a public/common space and therefore health care workforce are required to wear a medical mask while using these facilities.

**24) If I work in a non-clinical or administrative area, am I able to re-use my medical mask?**

No. The continuous masking guidelines indicate that the re-use of medical masks is NOT encouraged at this time due to the risk of self-contamination if the process of safely doffing, storing, and re-donning is not followed carefully. This guidance was initially developed for clinical care areas; however, to promote consistency in practices this principle will be applied to all settings, including non-clinical, administrative and public/common areas.