



## Expanded Masking Guidelines and Recommendations

The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has added additional levels of precaution to protect each other and those we care for. Recent changes to the masking guidelines for SHA sites and homes **now include the masking of all outpatients.**

### Who should be masking; where and when?

- **Health Care Workers** – all staff and physicians who work in a clinical care area/facility where there will be direct or indirect contact with patients/residents/clients will be required to wear a procedure mask at all times. If performing an [aerosol generating medical procedure \(AGMP\)](#), switch to an N95 respirator.
- **Patients (inpatient)** – Those with respiratory symptoms should be masked when they are in a common area or unable to maintain two metres during transport to a procedure/test.
- **\*NEW\* Patients (outpatient)** – All outpatients, if they can tolerate, are encouraged to wear a mask in SHA outpatient areas, such as ambulatory care, emergency departments, diagnostic imaging, and day surgery. Face masks should not be placed on children under the age of two.
- **Visitors (family members/support persons)** – All family members or support people who enter SHA facilities/homes are encouraged to wear a mask when in SHA homes and facilities, if tolerated.
- A [Rapid Update](#) has been created to share with your teams.

### When will this change start?

The most recent addition to the masking guidelines and recommendation of masking of all outpatients will go into effect by Friday, June 5 at 5:00 p.m.

### Why is this change happening?

The SHA has begun to resume and expand services, resulting in an increased number of patients and clients entering our health care facilities. Increased masking will help to best ensure the health and safety of all those within SHA facilities/homes and to help all outpatients feel comfortable during their visit.

### What do you need to know?

- Everyone will continue to be required to perform hand hygiene when they enter the unit/facility, frequently throughout their shift/time in an SHA site/home, and where indicated.
- **\*NEW\*** Outpatients and family members/support persons will be provided with a medical grade procedure mask when they enter an SHA facility/home. Please ensure you have a process for this to take place at your facility/home. It is recommended that boxes of masks are not left unattended.
- The mask must be changed and discarded when it becomes wet, damaged or soiled.
- There is currently no limit to the number of masks that will be provided, but judicious use according to the [Continuous and Extended PPE Use guidelines](#) is strongly encouraged.
- The re-use of 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 mask re-use will be provided.



- Patients, family members/support persons, staff and physicians should continue to practice physical distancing and proper hand hygiene.
- There may be instances where patients or family member/support person are uncomfortable wearing a mask (examples include but are not limited to: allergies, claustrophobia, children not keeping a mask on). If they cannot tolerate the SHA provided medical grade mask we ask that they consider the following as an alternative:
  - Personal mask - if you have a cloth mask or alternative that you feel comfortable with you are welcome to wear it
  - Maintain physical distance of a minimum of two metres at all times
  - Perform hand hygiene regularly
- Questions related to personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements may be directed to your manager or supervisor. If your manager or supervisor are not able to resolve your question, they will consult with the appropriate infection prevention and control practitioner.
- **\*NEW\*** Previous facility screening practice required all patients to be screened at entrances to determine if they needed to wear a mask. This no longer needs to take place. Please ensure that a medical grade mask is provided to all outpatients and designated family members/support persons upon entering the facility or unit (previously referred to as visitor screening). Designated family members and support persons are still required to be screened at facility entrances.

### Questions and Answers:

**1. When will the SHA begin to consider rolling back these masking guidelines and recommendation?**

The masking recommendations and guidelines are reviewed weekly to determine the appropriateness and factor in current research and evidence. Further work is underway with Public Health Epidemiology to develop triggers for when to reduce or rescind masking recommendations.

**2. There are cases where patients or family members are allergic to procedure masks or small children do not want to wear a mask. What should we do in these cases?**

There may be instances where patients or family member/support person are uncomfortable wearing a mask (examples include but are not limited to: allergies, claustrophobia, children not keeping a mask on). If they cannot tolerate the SHA provided medical grade mask we ask that they consider the following as an alternative:

- Personal mask - if you have a cloth mask or alternative that you feel comfortable you are welcome to wear it
- Maintain physical distance of a minimum of two metres at all times
- Perform hand hygiene regularly

**3. If a patient arrives at the facility with a cloth mask, can they continue to wear it?**

All outpatients and family members/support persons should be offered a medical grade mask and are encouraged to replace their cloth mask with it, if tolerated (please see above). There is variability in the quality and standards of cloth masks, the CDC recommends medical grade masks for the highest level of protection.