

## Update on Face Coverings in Healthcare: FAQs Updated 09/10/2020

Additional guidance has been provided by the Scottish Government following the publication of Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings released on 2 October 2020 and following the First Minister's announcement on 6 October 2020.

Below you will find answers to help anyone affected by the new guidance and understand how it applies to staff, individuals receiving care and visitors in a health care or community care setting. To help you find the information you are looking for, the questions have been split up into the following sections:

- A. Guidance overview
- B. Staff
- C. Individuals receiving care and
- D. Visitors
- E. Links to other relevant guidance

### **A. Guidance overview**

#### **1. Why has the guidance changed?**

There is new and emerging scientific evidence about the risk of spread of COVID-19 from people who are not displaying any symptoms but can still be infectious - either because they have the virus but have not yet become unwell –‘pre-symptomatic’- or because they are carrying the virus and have no symptoms – ‘asymptomatic’. The extended use of face masks by health and wider community care workers is designed to protect staff. Because it is often difficult in hospitals and other care settings such as care homes to maintain physical distancing – there is a risk that the infection can be spread from staff to staff.

The extended use of face masks to cover primary care (GP practices, dentists, opticians and pharmacies) and wider community care (including adult social or community care, adult residential and care home settings and domiciliary care), staff using of corridors and the like which do not allow for 2 m physical distancing recognising the potential for greater risk of exposure in these areas.

#### **2. When will this revised guidance come into effect?**

The revised guidance goes into effect immediately. NHS Grampian has already adapted to the guidance in most areas identified so this new guidance does not represent significant changes in our use of face masks/coverings in most work areas except for non-clinical sites where the corridors and other such common areas do not allow for 2 m physical distancing.

**Non-clinical sites are encouraged to support the usage of personal face coverings in areas where 2 m physical distancing is not possible in corridors and common areas.**

The Scottish Government will continue to keep the guidance under review in lieu of any subsequent evidence. This is particularly relevant as we work towards the re-mobilisation of NHS Grampian.

## **B. Staff**

### **1. I am a 'clinical' member of staff and I work in a hospital – but not in a ward – do I have to wear a mask?**

You should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times when you are working in a ward, clinic, other clinical department where patients are present, when you access an office through a ward or clinical area (where direct care is undertaken). Staff use of personally acquired masks or face coverings is not permitted in these areas.

Staff visiting the canteen areas of the hospital are not required to wear a face mask/covering but must adhere to 2 metre physical distancing.

If you work in an office, or other non-clinical area where there are no patients, AND you can maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others in that area – you do not have to wear a face mask/covering.

**If you are not able to maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others you should wear a face mask/covering.**

You should wear a face mask/covering in corridors and other non-clinical public spaces where it is not always possible to observe physical distancing measures (e.g. Foresterhill Lea, Summerfield House, Ashgrove House where corridors and similar areas are less than 2 metres).

All staff in public areas of the designated site may choose to wear their own face covering, however any staff who enter a clinical area, and who are providing clinical care, or who have difficulty in maintaining 2 metre physical distancing must use the Type IIR masks provided. It is important that these are worn and disposed of correctly.

## **2. I am not a ‘clinical’ member of staff, but I work in a ward - do I have to wear a mask?**

You should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times when you are working in a ward, clinic or other department where patients are present. This includes when passing through areas where direct care is taking place.

## **3. I work part of my day in a ward or clinic, and part of the day elsewhere – do I still have to wear my mask “throughout my shift”?**

As above - you should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times when you are working in or passing through a ward, clinic or other department where patients are present.

Please note: if you are not able to maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others in non-clinical areas – you should wear a face mask/covering.

## **4. I am based in an office – do I have to wear a mask?**

If you work in an office, or other non-direct care area AND you can maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others in that area, you do not have to wear a face mask/covering. Every effort should be made to ensure staff are able to physically distance, for instance staggered start times, working from home.

If you access your office through a ward or area where the direct care of individuals is undertaken, then you should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask when passing through these areas.

You should wear a face mask/covering in corridors less than 2metre and other public spaces in hospitals, care homes, surgeries and community settings where it is not always possible to observe physical distancing measures.

## **5. I have staff who are returning to work from shielding or were previously medically excluded?**

Where you have staff who are returning to work from shielding or medical exclusion, they can wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at work. An individual risk assessment should be undertaken, as per the workplace guidance which has been published on the SG website.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-riskassessment-for-the-workplace/>.

Every effort should be made by work areas to ensure staff are able to physically distance, for instance staggered start times, working from home.

## **6. Can I remove my face mask to take a drink?**

Yes. It is important to keep hydrated throughout your shift, particularly as it can become hot and uncomfortable wearing masks over a long period of time. Staff should observe hand hygiene prior to removing their mask and taking a drink. Hand hygiene should be observed after taking a drink and before putting a new face mask on. We would encourage managers to plan breaks in such a way that allows 2 metre physical distancing and therefore staff not having to wear a face mask.

## **7. How do I obtain Type 11R Fluid Repellent Surgical Masks, hand sanitiser, or waste bins for my area?**

Type 11R Fluid Repellent Surgical Masks, hand sanitiser and waste bins can be ordered through PECOS using SKU 249824.

If staff have any issues accessing supply of any item please contact Logistics Customer Service - [gram.logscustserv@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.logscustserv@nhs.scot).

## **8. What do staff do if they develop irritation or sensitivity to the provided masks?**

Please speak to your line manager or a Responsible Person, as per the guidance contained in the [Protocol on Managing Skin Care at Work](#). Please note this is an Intranet link and will not work on non-network devices. It is very important to address skin problems early and if necessary, your manager will make an OHS referral by emailing the skin health surveillance questionnaire directly to OHS at [gram.ohs@nhs.scot](mailto:gram.ohs@nhs.scot).

Additional guidance and support for staff can be found here:

<https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/for-nhs-grampian-staff/infection-prevention-control/>

## **9. I work in a GP practice or in the community – do I have to wear a mask?**

The guidance has now been formally updated to cover the use of Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Masks in primary care (GP practices, dentists, opticians and pharmacies) and wider community care (including respite, day care and care at home, including domiciliary care), in addition to acute hospitals (including mental health, maternity, neonatal and paediatrics), community hospitals and adult care

homes, in direct care settings. It outlines that staff engaged in direct care should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask throughout their shift.

**10. There are out of hours and primary care services who work out of hospital outpatient departments do these staff have to wear a mask?**

We are asking all staff who work from a hospital base to follow the guidance and wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask or face coverings as outlined above.

**11. I work in the community visiting clients at home. Will I have to wear a face mask?**

Yes, if you are involved in direct care, you will be required to wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask as per the recently published UK IPC remobilisation guidance. Individuals receiving care are not required to wear a face mask/covering in their own home. However, they may choose to do so and this should be respected.

As the person providing care will have a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask, that will provide both protection to the wearer and client, and provide source control.

**12. I work in the community visiting clients at home. Should other household members wear a mask when I am providing care for my client?**

Other household members are not required to wear a face mask or covering in their own home when a carer provides care to another member of their household.

However, they may choose to do so. Staff should continue to wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask and ensure other IPC measures such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, ventilation and physical distancing are observed.

**13. Do receptionists and clinicians have to wear a face mask at all times in outpatient departments, or is it just clinicians when providing direct care to patients?**

Receptionists should also wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times when working in a ward, clinic or other department where patients are present.

**14. Do receptionists and care home staff have to wear face masks at all times in the care home, or is just when caring for residents?**

Care home staff should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times within the care home setting when providing direct care. However, staff who work in a kitchen, laundry room or office within a care home only need to wear Fluid

Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask when they are on the unit or floors of the care home, interacting with staff and individuals. These staff will need to wear a face mask / covering at other times if they are not able to maintain a 2 metre distance from others.

**15. Do receptionists in health centre/doctors surgeries have to wear a mask at all times?**

If you work in an office/reception, or other non-clinical area where there are no patients, AND you can maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others in that area – you do not have to wear a face mask/covering.

**If you are not able to maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others – you should wear a face mask/covering.**

**16. I have a medical condition which makes it difficult for me to wear a face mask- what should I do?**

Please discuss this with your line manager in the first instance to ensure that you have the support you need, and that you are confident that you are appropriately protected. You will not be 'forced' to wear a face mask/covering. We expect staff to be fully supported and appropriate steps taken locally to implement the guidance in a way that has regard to staff well-being. A workforce risk assessment should be undertaken.

**17. Can I choose to wear a face mask if I want to/am worried?**

Yes. All other PPE should be selected and worn to provide adequate protection against the risks associated with the task or procedure being undertaken. Staff should continue to adhere to the COVID19 IPC remobilisation guidance when providing direct patient care.

**18. My glasses steam up when I am wearing a face mask– can I choose not to wear one?**

The nose strip on the face mask has been changed to improve the fit around the nose. This will help minimise the risk of your glasses steaming up. You may also wish to change your face mask/covering more frequently. [Additional guidance](#) is available to assist staff to try different ways of donning the mask and achieve a comfortable fit.

## **19. Can I wear my own face covering at work?**

Those involved in direct care must wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask throughout their shift as noted above. It should be noted that face coverings are not appropriate for clinical areas. It may also be difficult for uniformed staff to safely store and easily access their own face coverings for use whilst on duty. Face masks will be available for all employees who may require one, and increased availability is being arranged in response to the updated guidance.

For those not involved in direct care or working in a non-clinical area, a face covering (covering of any type (other than a face shield) which covers a person's nose and mouth) may be used.

**Non-clinical sites are encouraged to support the usage of face coverings in areas where 2 m physical distancing is not possible in corridors and common areas.**

## **20. Do I have to bring my own 'face covering' to wear when outside the clinical area?**

Personal face coverings should be worn when travelling to and from work if using public transport and where physical distancing is not possible, such as when car sharing with colleagues, in line with wider national guidance.

Staff have access to face masks at work, which you can use in both clinical and non-clinical areas. You are encouraged to bring your own face covering for use in non-clinical areas.

## **21. Will NHS Grampian provide face coverings or masks for me to wear if I travel to work on public transport?**

No. Individuals can choose which type of face covering they wish to wear outside of work. This does not have to be a surgical face mask. Face coverings are also provided by some transport providers. However, it is mandatory to wear a face covering, at this time.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-2-staying-safe-and-protectingothers/pages/face-coverings/>

## **22. What is the "correct waste bin" to dispose of face masks in?**

All staff who have been working in clinical areas should dispose of the mask, wipes, and gloves in the designated orange waste bags on location. Visitors or staff not directly involved in treating patients can dispose of their surgical face mask after use in the lidded orange bag waste bins on leaving the healthcare premises.

Where IIR surgical face masks need to be disposed of in a non-clinical area they may be disposed of in a lidded black bag waste bin. Wipes and gloves may also be disposed of in black waste bags (no lidded bin required) in non-clinical areas.

Areas that do not have lidded black bag waste bins for mask disposal can order these bins by emailing [gram-uhb.covid19supplies@nhs.net](mailto:gram-uhb.covid19supplies@nhs.net).

**23. I've heard a lot about shortages of PPE – will there be enough face masks for everyone to wear?**

Yes. National procurement have confirmed there is plentiful stock available to meet any increase in demand through this change of policy.

**24. Where will I be able to get masks?**

Face masks are available at the entrance to all hospitals, wards and departments and the care home, and at additional PPE stations provided throughout the sites.

**25. Is 'extended' use of face masks different to 'sessional use' of face masks?**

Yes. Extended use of face masks relates to the specific guidance that staff should wear Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times for the duration of their shift in a direct care environment. Face mask must be removed and replaced as necessary (observing hand hygiene before the mask is removed and before putting another mask on), and as recommended during the shift, including e.g. if it becomes contaminated, damaged or moist.

**26. Do I have to wear a face mask as a staff member if I am able to physically distance from others?**

Yes, if you are in a ward or clinical area. If you are in a non-clinical or public space, you are encouraged to wear a face mask/covering in line with national policy.

**27. Do I have to wear a face mask as a visitor if I am able to physically distance from others?**

Any individual visiting or attending an acute adult hospital (including mental health, maternity, neonatal and paediatrics), community hospitals, primary care premises (GP practices, dentists, opticians and pharmacies), or an adult care home is asked to wear a face covering of the same kind that the Scottish Government has



recommended be worn on public transport, where it's not always possible to maintain a 2 metre distance from other people.

The hospital, primary care service or adult care home should provide visitors with a face mask where required.

**28. If clinical areas are able to risk assess and evidence that they are able to physically distance are they going to be allowed to do so or will this be a blanket 'all areas must wear face masks'?**

You should wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask at all times when you are working in a ward, clinic or other department where patients are present. This includes when passing through areas where direct care is taking place. The rationale for the change is to protect staff and patients based on emerging scientific evidence.

**29. Who will ensure that face coverings are being worn in corridors where physical distancing cannot be achieved?**

We expect all staff to act as good role models and comply with the guidance provided. There is no plan to formally 'police' compliance. However, the Care Inspectorate and Healthcare Improvement Scotland, as part of their inspections process in care homes and hospitals, will observe compliance of this guidance.

**30. Do I need to wear face masks if I am face fit testing?**

Yes. All testers should wear a mask when carrying out face fit testing as this role will prevent you from physical distancing.

**31. Do I have to wear a facemask during mealtimes or while in changing rooms?**

Staff are not required to wear a face mask during mealtimes in staff restaurants or when in changing rooms but should do so when transiting to these locations and if needing to queue in cafeteria. Again, carrying out physical distancing is essential during these times as is hand hygiene using alcohol rub where hand washing facilities are not available. During breaks, and where possible, consideration should be given to facilitating the use of outdoor spaces, which provide a safer alternative than enclosed indoor spaces. Alternatively, consideration should be made to the staggering of staff breaks etc.

**32. I need to car share with a colleague, is it safe to do so?**

In line with the latest advice from Transport Scotland, you should only travel with members of your own, or extended, household. We recognise that there may be occasions when there is no alternative but to travel with people out with your household. On such occasions, you should:

- keep to small groups of people, up to 6 at any one time
- keep your distance and take care entering and exiting the vehicle
- sit as far apart as possible in the vehicle, avoiding face-to-face
- share the transport whether it is a car or minibus or other private vehicle with the same people each time
- maintain good ventilation by keeping the car windows open if possible
- ensure everyone, unless they are exempt, wears a face covering
- observe hand hygiene before and after your journey
- if the vehicle is your responsibility clean the door handles and other areas that people touch.

For further information please visit the link provided below:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/transport-transition-plan/advice-on-howto-travel-safely/>

### **33. I support people at home with non-personal care tasks, should I be wearing a Type IIR face mask?**

If you provide non-personal care and you can maintain 2 metre physical distancing from others in the area, you do not have to wear a face mask/covering.

### **34. Am I required to wear a face mask/covering whilst travelling between people's homes I am providing support for?**

If travelling between people's homes using public transport, or placed in a situation where physical distancing is not possible in line with wider national guidance, personal face coverings should be worn. If you are travelling alone between people's homes, you do not have to wear a face mask/covering.

### **35. What conditions are exempt from wearing a face mask in public areas of the facilities?**

The use of the provided masks or face coverings in the public areas of designated sites is subject to certain exclusions. People who find the wearing of face coverings to be detrimental to their condition (such as people with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, certain phobias and skin conditions) can be exempted from the requirement to wear a mask or face covering (but only in non-clinical areas). People

will not be refused access to the facilities if they are unable to wear the provided masks or a face covering.

**36. Do they have to evidence reasons for exemption?**

No. Staff and members of the public who attest that they are unable to wear a mask or face covering will not be asked to provide any evidence of their reason for exemption.

**37. What happens if someone refuses, do security have to authority to stop them entering?**

Where possible, staff shall invite each person entering a designated site to sanitise their hands and either wear a face covering or don the provided mask. In buildings where it is not possible to have staff or security monitoring the donning of the mask, clear signage will be provided. Access to facilities will not be denied to those who are unable to wear a face covering or the provided mask.

**38. Who shall be available to help with putting on and removing Type 11R Masks if assistance is required?**

Visual instructions on how to don or doff the mask will be located at each mask holding point at the entrance of the buildings where this guidance applies. If you, a visitor, or patient has difficulty donning the mask, they should take it with them and ask an available member of NHS staff to assist before entering a clinical area.

**39. What happens if someone is not wearing a face covering or mask and is observed not to be adhering to the 2 metre physical distancing rules?**

Everyone will be encouraged to wear a mask to keep themselves and others safe while in a clinical environment. If they are unable to wear a mask, they must ensure complete adherence to physical distancing and other hygiene measures such as frequent hand washing, and any other instructions from clinical staff.

Should staff be repeatedly observed to be ignoring physical distancing during their working day, their Manager, or those who witness the breaches should remind the staff member of the importance of physical distancing if they feel comfortable in doing so. If reminding that member of staff does not result in compliance with physical distancing, their Manager should consider progressing to the NHS Scotland Conduct Policy, using the Early Resolution process.

## **C. Individuals receiving care and visitors**

### **1. What about in-patients receiving care in bed. Would they need to wear a mask?**

Use of a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask by all in-patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 is required, if this can be tolerated and does not compromise their care, such as when receiving oxygen therapy.

However, wearing a face mask/covering whilst in bed is not required by inpatients for those who do not have confirmed or suspected COVID-19. Staff should continue to wear a Fluid Resistant (Type IIR) Surgical Mask in this situation and ensure other IPC measures such as hand hygiene; respiratory etiquette, ventilation and physical distancing are to be observed.

### **2. What should patients and visitors wear when attending for appointments?**

The new guidance asks that all patients attending clinics, and all hospital visitors should wear a face mask/covering when attending. This advice is in line with existing public health advice to the public asking for face coverings to be worn in public places where 2 metre physical distancing is not possible. A facemask can be offered if necessary.

Children over the age of 5 years old should also wear a face mask/covering when visiting or attending a hospital, or any other health service or social care service, in line with national policy, and based on the WHO guidance published on 21 August.

### **3. How should NHS Grampian let patients know to wear face coverings?**

Departments should include generic information on physical distancing and use of face masks/coverings in appointment letters and other communications plus clear signage. Other communication methods could include using social media and websites to promote this requirement.

### **4. I am a member of the public and have worn my own face covering to hospital, if it gets wet or contaminated will the hospital supply me with another?**

Yes. Face masks will be available in all wards and departments, or a replacement mask can be provided on request.

### **5. If I receive care at home, or in a care home, do I have to wear a mask?**

Individuals receiving care are not required to wear a face mask/covering in their own home (which includes residents in a care home – unless they have suspected or confirmed COVID-19). However, they may choose to and this should be respected. Care staff in adult home settings are required to wear a Type IIR Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask. Where clinical waste disposal is not available, used face masks should be double bagged and disposed of in domestic waste.

## **6. Do care home residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 have to wear a mask 24/7?**

Residents in care homes with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 would not be expected to wear a mask 24/7. Face masks, should be used when receiving direct care or when unable to maintain 2 metre distancing. However, this may not always be possible and the guidance states: “if this can be tolerated and does not compromise care”. Appropriate physical distancing and wider IPC measures are critical, with the use of face masks being a further line of defence.

## **7. What should I do if an individual receiving outpatient care or a visitor refuses to wear a mask or face covering?**

Politely encourage all individuals to comply with the request to use a face mask/covering, or offer them a surgical mask to wear, and, where necessary, highlight the benefits of wearing a face mask/covering. The hospital, primary care service or adult care home should provide visitors with a face mask where required.

Where visitors decline to wear face masks/coverings, clinicians / care home managers should apply judgement and consider if other IPC measures, such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, ventilation and physical distancing are sufficient depending on the patient / resident / client’s condition and the care pathway.

## **8. Who shall be available to help with putting on and removing Type 11R Masks if assistance is required?**

[This poster](#) is available for posting at mask collection points to instruct on the correct procedures for donning the provided masks. If a patient or visitor has difficulty putting on the mask, they should request support from an available member staff to assist them before entering a clinical area.

## **9. I have communication challenges, that requires me to lip read, can I ask for the mask to be removed?**

Yes, if it is safe to do so. The person wearing a face covering or face mask needs to understand the risk of doing so. If they choose to do so, then the person should wash their hands, physically distance and remove their mask. If physical distancing is not possible, then the person should keep the mask on, and alternative communications methods used – such as writing information down or text to speech software.

If a staff member needs to lip read then, it is acceptable that only the staff member wear a Fluid Resistant Surgical Mask (which has protective and source control properties). The advice is not to use visors on their own as an alternative to face masks. Face visors are designed to reduce the risk of splashes from bloods and bodily fluids and are usually worn with facemasks in a healthcare setting. In addition, it is important to note that employers are responsible for ensuring that staff wear the correct PPE for the tasks they need to undertake.

The Scottish Government is working with businesses on the supply of transparent masks for health and care settings – however, transparent masks are not classed as PPE at this time. Work is underway to get transparent facemasks upgraded and fit for purpose. There is no exact timescale for this work to be complete. Visitors to hospitals and care homes can use transparent face masks as a face covering. However, these are more expensive, and visitors should not be forced to wear them.

## **D. Links to other relevant guidance and information**

### **1. Does the guidance apply to unpaid carers?**

Separate guidance has been created for unpaid carers, this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-unpaid-carers/>

### **2. Where can Social and wider community care staff find the latest setting specific guidance relevant to them?**

Social and wider community care staff can find the latest setting specific guidance relevant to them [here](#). These sector specific guidance documents are being updated to align with the new UK IPC remobilisation guidance.

Separate [guidance](#) has been issued for adult social care building-based day services which outlines that supported people using the service do not need to wear face coverings or masks.

### **3. Is there guidance available detailing safer workplaces and requirements?**

NHS Grampian guidance and documents have been created and can be found at the following link:

<https://covid19.nhsgrampian.org/for-nhs-grampian-staff/safe-workplaces/>