

COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control: Green Alert - Low Transmission

Mask use NOT required on entry

		STANDARD PRECAUTIONS ALWAYS APPLY	
		Ensure screening and triage processes are in place to manage patients with suspected COVID-19	
Patients	<p>Standard precautions: hand hygiene, physical distancing, cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene and personal hygiene</p> <p>Unless urgent, exclude outpatients with suspected/probable/confirmed COVID-19</p> <p>All patients with an acute respiratory illness to wear a mask on presentation and transit</p>		  
Health workers (HW)	<p>Standard Precautions</p> <p>Transmission based precautions for patients with suspected/probable/confirmed COVID-19 and acute respiratory illness</p> <p>All ED staff to wear surgical masks in clinical areas during patient care</p> <p>Physical distancing to apply for all staff breaks</p>		  <p>OR</p>  
Visitors	<p>No restrictions if approved during the COVID-19 entry screening criteria</p> <p>Promote hand hygiene and physical distancing at entry to health facility and patient rooms</p>		

The FAQs provide an explanation of when masks need to be worn during HW patient interactions, patients, visitors, carers and other people coming into NSW health facilities.

HEALTH WORKERS	
When should I wear a mask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decision about using a mask for patient care should be considered as part of the risk assessment for standard precautions (see Risk assessment). Part of the risk assessment is the anticipated exposure risk of blood or body fluid to eyes/mouth/nose • Masks should still be worn when assessing or providing care to any patient with acute respiratory symptoms • Masks/respirators are still required for respiratory aerosol generating procedures
Why do I need to wear a mask when working in the ED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the risk of COVID-19 infection is very low in the community, the emergency departments are thought to be a higher risk environment and a surgical mask is recommended for all patient care within 1.5m of a patient. • If a patient has acute respiratory illness or is a known contact of COVID-19, then contact and droplet precautions are required.
When in crowded areas of the hospital e.g. eating areas/cafeteria, do HWs need to wear a surgical mask?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will be at the HW's discretion. • Physical distancing, cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene is always to be practiced.
During this PPE GREEN Alert, should HWs with conditions that place them in a 'vulnerable' group be redeployed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable HWs should be individually risk assessed to determine their suitability for clinical areas. • Vulnerable HWs may choose to wear a surgical mask when within 1.5 metres of any patient to reduce this risk and this should be considered in the risk assessment.
If a HW is in a non-clinical area or office, should they wear a surgical mask?	<p>No, masks do not need to be worn in these settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing, cough etiquette/respiratory hygiene and hand hygiene are always to be practiced.
If a visitor asks why a HW is not wearing a surgical mask, how should the HW respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks are not required for routine patient care. Information about the risk levels should be placed in public spaces for patients and the relatives and carers.
If a HW travels in a shared health vehicle with another HW, do they need to wear a surgical mask?	<p>Masks are unlikely to be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please refer to Appendix D – Transport Health Worker Advice Guidance

HEALTH WORKERS (cont.)	
<p>Should HWs entering a school for the provision of a service wear a mask?</p> <p>(E.g. Immunisation or school within a health facility)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For school-based programs, masks are not routinely recommended. However, a risk assessment must always be performed and there may be situations where a mask is worn. • For schools located within health facilities, HWs can wear a mask if they are required to provide direct care for high risk person/client (acute respiratory illness) within 1.5 metres.
PATIENTS	
<p>When should a patient wear a mask (see also questions regarding cloth masks below)?</p>	<p>A mask should be worn if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the patient is attending a health facility and has acute respiratory symptoms (whether they have had a COVID-19 test or not). e.g. Emergency Department, Outpatient Clinic, Delivery Suite, Medical Imaging, Pathology Collection. • Patients attending the emergency department for any reason should be wearing a mask if able to be tolerated
<p>Once a patient is admitted to a clinical area, are they required to wear a surgical mask while they are an inpatient?</p>	<p>Patients will not usually be required to wear a mask.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they have acute respiratory symptoms or are suspected, probable or confirmed COVID, they are required to wear a surgical mask if they are leaving their room (for example going to medical imaging department) <p>Remember: Some patients will not be able to tolerate a mask.</p>
<p>Why don't children 12 years old and under need to wear a mask if they have respiratory symptoms?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, it is not practical for children to be fitted with a mask. • There appears to be limited transmission of COVID-19 from children to adults. • If a child is wearing a mask, then this can continue while the child is inside a health facility. • Masks can be choking hazards for children under two, therefore, they are not suitable for this age group. • This advice is consistent with other jurisdictions.
<p>Can a patient with suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 wear a P2/N95 respirator?</p>	<p>Patients should not wear a P2/N95 respirator but may be asked to wear a surgical mask when in a shared space.</p>

CLOTH MASKS	
Can a HW wear a cloth mask at work?	<p>No.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloth masks vary in quality and effectiveness and they are not fluid resistant. This means they will not prevent blood, body fluids and respiratory droplets penetrating the mask. • A cloth mask can be worn by HWs outside the health facility e.g. travelling to and from work.
If a visitor comes in wearing a cloth mask, should it be changed to a surgical mask?	<p>No.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors are not required to wear masks. • Reminders regarding hand hygiene, physical distancing, avoiding touching their mask and cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene are to be provided. • If the visitor has acute respiratory symptoms or fever, they should not be allowed entry as per screening criteria.
If a patient/client, <u>without any COVID-19 symptoms</u>, comes in wearing a cloth mask, should it be changed to a surgical mask?	<p>No.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are not required to wear a mask but may continue to wear based on personal choice. • Reminders regarding hand hygiene, physical distancing, avoiding touching their mask and cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene are to be provided.
If a patient/client, <u>with acute respiratory illness or COVID-19 symptoms</u>, comes in wearing a cloth mask, should it be changed to a surgical mask?	<p>Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A cloth mask will become damp very quickly when someone has an acute respiratory illness, fever or COVID-19 symptoms. • The mask will be much less effective when damp and may be touched frequently by the patient. • A surgical mask should be provided for the patient and usual admission/discharge processes for suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients are to be followed. • Reminders regarding hand hygiene, physical distancing, avoiding touching their mask and cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene are to be provided. • Access to tissues, alcohol-based hand rub and a bin is to be provided.
If a member of the community wears a towel, scarf, tea towel etc into the health facility, is this classified as a 'cloth mask'?	<p>No, these are not classified as cloth masks NSW Health has released general guidance for cloth masks. This information should be followed.</p>

HOME VISITS	
Do HWs need to wear a surgical mask when they are visiting a patient in their home to provide healthcare?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A surgical mask is recommended only if the patient has respiratory symptoms or is in self-isolation. • A surgical mask is recommended if in an area of increased testing • HWs should maintain physical distancing whenever possible. • Patients are not required to wear a mask but may choose to wear one.
CARER IN A HEALTHCARE SETTING	
Should carers wear a surgical face mask if within 1.5 metres of a patient?	Yes, if the person has an acute respiratory illness and COVID has not been ruled out by testing.
VISITORS	
Are visitors required to wear a mask if they come to a health facility?	<p>No, they are not required to wear a mask.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they have acute respiratory symptoms, they need to defer their visit. • If they are already wearing a cloth or surgical mask, they can continue to wear this. See section on Cloth Masks.
What should be done if a visitor appears to have acute respiratory symptoms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer an alternative such as a virtual visit. • The visitor should be asked to defer their visit if possible. • they must be referred for COVID testing and told to isolate until negative test
AGED CARE FACILITIES/MULTI-PURPOSE SERVICE (MPS)	
Does a resident in an aged care facility or MPS need to wear a surgical mask?	<p>No.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is classified as their home.

PATIENTS WITH A DISABILITY, COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT, BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

<p>Should a HW/carer/visitor wear a surgical mask if within 1.5 metres of a patient?</p>	<p>HW/carer/visitor in DCFs should take extra precautions including the use of masks where there are areas for increased testing see NSW Health advice for RACFs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HWs should wear a mask if patient has acute respiratory symptoms or if there is uncontrolled behaviour by the patient/person. • HWs, visitors and/or carers wearing a surgical mask may cause some patients distress or trigger changes to their behaviour or mental health condition. This will require a risk assessment and ongoing monitoring to determine the best way to manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 when providing care within 1.5 metres of the patient. If a risk assessment determines that a mask will pose a physical risk to the patient, alternatives such as physical distancing and full-face shield should be considered. The risk assessment should determine the appropriate PPE for the HW. • All decisions regarding the risk assessment should be documented in the patients' healthcare record.
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VOLUNTEERS IN A HEALTHCARE SETTING

<p>Are volunteers required to wear a mask?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers are not required to wear a mask. If they are in a vulnerable group, they may choose to wear a mask while in the healthcare setting. • If volunteering in ED a mask should be worn within 1.5m of a patient. • Reminders regarding hand hygiene, physical distancing, cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene and not coming to the facility if unwell are to be provided.
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CONTRACTORS

<p>When should a contractor wear a mask?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are not required to wear a mask while in the facility unless they require one for dust/gas/environmental exposures. • If working within ED a mask should be worn within 1.5m of patients. • Reminders regarding hand hygiene, physical distancing, cough etiquette and respiratory hygiene are to be provided. • It is expected that contractors maintain adequate supplies of PPE and hand sanitisers as part of their work health and safety (WHS) obligations.
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STOCK DELIVERY TO CLINICAL AREAS – EXTERNAL DELIVERY/COURIER COMPANIES

<p>Do delivery/courier staff need to wear a mask (surgical or own cloth) if they are making a delivery to clinical areas?</p>	<p>No, masks are not routinely required unless within 1.5m of patients in the ED setting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol hand rub should be made available to delivery/courier staff. • Reminders regarding physical distancing, cough etiquette, respiratory hygiene and not being onsite if they have acute respiratory symptoms or fever.
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VALVE MASKS

If a patient or a visitor is wearing a mask with a valve, do we need to change it to a surgical mask?

Yes, if the patient/visitor is wearing a mask because of respiratory symptoms, this should be changed.

- These masks should not be worn as the exhalation valve is generally not filtered and particles are able to be exhaled via the valve.