

## TITLE

**USE OF MASKS DURING COVID-19**

## SCOPE

Provincial

## DOCUMENT #

HCS-267

## APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Emergency Coordination Centre

## INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE

July 15, 2020

## SPONSOR

Personal Protective Equipment Task Force

## REVISION EFFECTIVE DATE

Not applicable

## PARENT DOCUMENT TITLE, TYPE, AND NUMBER

Not applicable

## SCHEDULED REVIEW DATE

July 15, 2021

**NOTE:** The first appearance of terms in bold in the body of this document (except titles) are defined terms – please refer to the Definitions section.

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**OBJECTIVES**

- To clarify and provide decision support for masking requirements in **Alberta Health Services (AHS) settings** for **health care providers, patients** (both pediatric and **adult**), **families**, and [visitors](#).
- To provide direction on the use of masking strategies that will help in preventing the transmission of COVID-19.
- To provide guidance to patients, families, and visitors who may be required to wear a mask prior to entering AHS settings, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**PRINCIPLES**

Continuous masking can function either as source control (being worn to protect others) or part of **personal protective equipment (PPE)** (to protect the wearer) to prevent or control the spread of COVID-19.

AHS requires continuous masking by health care providers who work in settings where patient care is provided and in all other areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This includes a minimum of two (2) metres separation from patients, families, and visitors, or **AHS People**. AHS promotes education (e.g., AHS [Information for Albertans](#)), prevention strategies, and public awareness to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to health care providers, patients, families, and visitors.

## APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary).

## ELEMENTS

### 1. Points of Emphasis

- 1.1 AHS People who have contact with others are required to continuously mask (refer to the AHS [COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook v1.0](#)) when:
  - a) working in patient care areas;
  - b) providing direct patient care; and/or
  - c) in all areas of an AHS setting where physical distancing of two (2) metres cannot be maintained.
- 1.2 Continuous masking is required in AHS settings by AHS People where there may be contact with patients, families, visitors, or the public (e.g., elevator, common areas, and gift shops).
  - a) In areas (e.g., corporate settings, health records departments, laboratory services) where physical distancing of two (2) metres cannot be maintained, continuous masking is also required.
- 1.3 AHS People shall be trained in the correct use of any PPE (including masks) that is required for their role. [Hand hygiene must be performed immediately before and after both donning and doffing masks.](#)
- 1.4 In AHS settings where screening is available, patients, families, and visitors shall be asked to perform hand hygiene and be provided with a procedure mask to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- 1.5 In AHS settings where screening is not available and where two (2) metres of physical distancing is not possible, hand hygiene shall be performed and procedure masks will be made available. Masks will be provided by the program or site.
- 1.6 If the mask becomes damp, soiled, or damaged, the mask must be immediately discarded in a garbage container. A new mask shall be provided upon request by the appropriate program or site. Hand hygiene shall be performed prior to doffing and after handling a used mask as per Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) recommendations.
- 1.7 Follow the AHS [Interim IPC Recommendations COVID-19](#) including hand hygiene and the use of additional PPE equipment when delivering patient care in accordance with the AHS [Point of Care Risk Assessment \(PCRA\)](#).

## 2. Masking Requirements for Health Care Providers

- 2.1 Health care providers shall follow routine practices, hand hygiene, and wear a procedure mask continuously, at all times and in all areas of their workplace if they are involved in direct patient care, as per the AHS [Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Healthcare Settings](#). Additional PPE may be required based on the AHS [Point of Care Risk Assessment \(PCRA\)](#).
- 2.2 Health care providers in care settings who are not providing direct patient care shall follow routine practices, hand hygiene, and wear a procedure mask continuously, and in all areas of their workplace. Additionally, continuous masking is required if they cannot maintain adequate physical distancing or enter other public areas (e.g., elevators, common areas, gift shops) within the AHS setting where patients, families, and visitors may be present, as per the AHS [Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Healthcare Settings](#).
- 2.3 Additional PPE guidance is provided to health care providers working in areas separating asymptomatic and suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases and for outbreak settings. Refer to AHS [novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- 2.4 For health care providers working in home care or congregate living sites, the practice of continuous masking and using appropriate PPE is required, as per the AHS [Guidelines for Continuous Masking and Use of Face Shields in Home Care and Congregate Living Settings](#).

## 3. Masking Requirements for Adult Outpatients, Families, and Visitors

- 3.1 All patients, families, and visitors entering an AHS setting shall be asked to perform hand hygiene, and will be provided with a procedure mask. The mask should be worn for the duration of their visit.
  - a) Masks may be provided at a screening point or by the specific program or site if there is no screening area.
  - b) Patients, families, and visitors may be permitted to wear their own procedure mask.
- 3.2 For those patients, families, and visitors who are unable to wear a mask for medical or other reasons, the health care team should work collaboratively with them to find the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation.
- 3.3 In exceptional circumstances, patients, families, and visitors who refuse to wear a mask, may be asked to leave the AHS setting.
  - a) This decision should be balanced with ensuring the safety of the patient and acuity of the patient's needs.
  - b) The health care provider shall notify the **Accountable Leader** for their program or site in these circumstances.

- 3.4 Patients, families, and visitors who screen positive for symptoms of COVID-19 may be advised to leave the AHS setting by the health care provider with instructions on isolation and to use the online AHS [COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) for Albertans or to call Health Link at 811 to arrange for testing.
- 3.5 Patients, families, and visitors should be provided education by a health care provider on:
- the use of masks;
  - hand hygiene; and
  - donning and doffing masks (e.g., when to remove, change, or discard).

#### 4. Use of Masks in a Pediatric Outpatient Setting

- 4.1 As a general principle, patients from three (3) to 18 years of age are expected to wear masks to appointments at AHS settings (including emergency departments, urgent care centres, and outpatient clinics) or when visiting others at risk.
- 4.2 For young infants and toddlers who are two (2) years of age and under, masks are not recommended. For these children, consider alternative strategies to keep them calm, safe (e.g., in a stroller, infant carrier, or parent's/guardian's arms), and faced towards the parent/guardian to minimize droplet spread.
- 4.3 Families should maintain two (2) metres of physical distance from other families and try to prevent children from wandering.
- AHS advises that only one (1) designated family/support person accompany a child to scheduled visits. If alternate care arrangements cannot be made for other family members, the designated/family support person should be advised to contact the clinic in advance.
- 4.4 Wearing a mask may not be appropriate or tolerated for a small percentage of children. The health care team should work collaboratively with the parent/guardian to find the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation.
- 4.5 For those children who can tolerate a mask, provide a child-appropriate mask or an adult mask adjusted to fit the child. As child-sized masks will be limited in availability, adult-size masks should be used for older/larger children and 'solutions' such as in this [video](#) can be used to adjust adult masks to fit a child.

#### 5. Masking Requirements for Adult and Pediatric Inpatients

- 5.1 Asymptomatic inpatients who are not on precautions do not require continuous masking unless instructed by the health care provider (e.g., inpatients leaving their room for a procedure or accessing common areas of the AHS setting).

- 5.2 All patients (asymptomatic and symptomatic) should be provided with education by a health care provider on appropriate masking within their care setting and consideration of their medical condition.

## DEFINITIONS

**Accountable Leader** means the individual who has ultimate accountability to ensure consideration and completion of the listed steps in the management of the AHS *Use of Masks during COVID-19* Directive. Responsibility for some or all of the components of management may be delegated to the appropriate level responsible administrative leader, but accountability remains at the senior level.

**Adult** means a person aged 18 years and older.

**AHS People** means anyone who provides care or services, or who acts on behalf of AHS, which may include AHS board members, AHS employees, AHS Medical Staff members (physicians, dentists, oral and maxillofacial surgeons, and podiatrists), AHS midwifery staff members, other Allied Health professionals with an AHS appointment and privileges, students, volunteers, researchers working with AHS or studying AHS staff or patients.

**Alberta Health Services (AHS) setting** means, for the purposes of this directive, any environment where treatment/procedures and other health services are delivered by, on behalf of, or in conjunction with, Alberta Health Services. This includes but is not necessarily restricted to all land, facilities, affiliated sites, mobile equipment and vehicles owned, leased, or rented, and AHS corporate offices for the purpose of conducting AHS business.

**Family(-ies)** means one or more individuals identified by the patient as an important support, and who the patient wishes to be included in any encounters with the health care system, including but not limited to, family members, legal guardians, friends, and informal caregivers.

**Health care provider** means any person who provides goods or services to a patient, inclusive of health care professionals, staff, students, volunteers and other persons acting on behalf of or in conjunction with Alberta Health Services.

**Patient** means an adult or child who receives or has requested health care or services from Alberta Health Services and its health care providers or individuals authorized to act on behalf of Alberta Health Services. This term is inclusive of residents, clients and outpatients.

**Personal protective equipment (PPE)** means any specialized clothing or safety items worn by individuals prior to contact with potential or identified hazards, such as from a direct exposure to blood, tissue, and/or body fluids.

## REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Resources:
  - [COVID-19 Essential Visitor and Designated Family/Support Guidance](#)
  - [Family Support & Visitation of Patients & Residents](#)
  - [Fit for Work](#)
  - [Guidance to Help Make Continuous Masking Work for You.](#)

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- [Guidelines for Continuous Masking and Use of Face Shields in Home Care and Congregate Living Settings](#)
- [Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Healthcare Settings.](#)
- [Information for Albertans](#)
- [Interim IPC Recommendations COVID-19](#)
- [IPC Guidance for Resuming Ambulatory Care Clinics](#)
- [novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Point of Care Risk Assessment \(PCRA\)](#)
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
  - [Chief Medical Officer of Health \(CMOH\) Order 10-2020](#)
  - [Children mask? How to fit adult mask to kids](#)

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