TITLE
USE OF MASKS DURING COVID-19

OBJECTIVES
- To clarify and provide decision support for masking requirements in an Alberta Health Services (AHS) facility/setting (including community settings) for AHS People, patients, families, designated family/support persons, 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, designated family/support persons, and visitors who are required to wear a mask when entering AHS facilities/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. Working collaboratively, we shall ask all to assist us in limiting the spread of COVID-19 through the use of procedure masks in AHS facilities/settings.

AHS requires continuous masking by health care providers who work in facilities/settings where patient care is provided and in all other areas of these facilities/settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained. This includes a minimum of two (2) metres separation from patients, families, designated family/support persons, 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, designated family/support persons, 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 for AHS People**

   1.1 AHS People are required to continuously mask in AHS facilities/settings (refer to the AHS COVID-19 Relaunch Playbook) when:

   a) working in patient care areas;

   b) providing direct patient care;

   c) in all areas of an AHS facility/setting (both clinical and non-clinical) where physical distancing of two (2) metres cannot be maintained. This includes any areas within a facility/setting where there may be contact with patients, families, designated family/support persons, visitors, or the public (e.g., elevator, common areas, gift shops); or

   d) performing job duties (e.g., environmental health, public health) while engaging with the public.

   1.2 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 donning and before and after doffing a mask.

   1.3 AHS People who work in areas with no direct contact with patients or patient items (e.g., corporate settings, health records departments, laboratory services) are required to wear a mask continuously in all areas of their workplace where they cannot maintain adequate physical distancing of two (2) metres.

      a) Only in an administrative setting (e.g., Southport Tower, Seventh Street Plaza) may AHS People choose to wear a non-procedure mask (e.g., their own clean cloth mask).

   1.4 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. **Points of Emphasis for Patients, Families, Designated Family/Support Persons, and Visitors**

   2.1 Patients, families, designated family/support persons, and visitors shall be asked to wear a procedure mask when entering AHS facilities/settings to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.
When entering an AHS facility/setting where screening is available, patients, families, designated family/support persons, and visitors shall be asked to perform hand hygiene and be provided with and asked to wear a procedure mask.

In AHS facilities/settings where screening is not available, hand hygiene shall be performed and procedure masks will be made available and required to be worn. Masks will be provided by the program or site.

Patients, families, designated family/support persons, 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).

If the procedure mask becomes damp, soiled, or damaged, the procedure mask must be immediately discarded in a garbage container. A new procedure 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.

3. Masking Requirements Where Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Orders Apply

In AHS facilities/settings where CMOH Orders that provide masking requirements apply, CMOH Orders shall be followed by AHS People, patients, families, designated family/support persons, and visitors. Refer to the following CMOH Orders and guidance documents for masking requirements and guidance in the following settings:

- For Supportive Living, Long-term Care, and Hospice settings, refer to CMOH Order 29-2020 and the AHS Designated Family/Support Access and Visitation in Designated Living Option and Hospice Settings During COVID-19 Directive.

- For Residential Addiction Treatment facilities/settings, refer to CMOH Order 27-2020.

4. Masking Requirements for Health Care Providers

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.** Additional PPE may be required based on the AHS *Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA).*

4.2 When entering any public areas of an AHS facility/setting (e.g., elevators, common areas, gift shops) where two (2) metres of distancing cannot be maintained and where there is potential to come into contact with patient’s items or patients, families, designated family/support persons, or visitors, health care providers shall don a procedure mask as per the AHS *Guidelines for Continuous Masking.*

4.3 Additional PPE guidance is provided to health care providers working in areas assessing and triaging asymptomatic or suspected/confirmed COVID-19 cases and for outbreak settings. Refer to the AHS *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) novel coronavirus (COVID-19)* web page.

4.4 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.*

5. **Masking Requirements for Adult Inpatients**

5.1 Adult inpatients do not require continuous masking in their room unless instructed by the health care provider.

5.2 Adult inpatients, when leaving their room or moving within other areas of the AHS facility/setting (e.g., inpatients leaving their room for a procedure or accessing common areas), shall continuously mask.

5.3 All adult inpatients (asymptomatic and symptomatic) should be provided with education by a health care provider on appropriate masking within their care setting and in consideration of their medical condition.

5.4 If adult inpatients are unable or refuse to mask, the health care team should work collaboratively with them to find the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation, as per the AHS *How to Support Mask Wearing COVID-19 Worker Supports.*

6. **Masking Requirements for Adult Outpatients**

6.1 All adult outpatients and designated family/support persons, if any, when entering an AHS facility/setting shall be asked to perform hand hygiene, and will be provided with and asked to wear a procedure mask. The mask should be worn for the duration of their visit.

   a) Refer to Section 8 below for additional information on masking for designated family/support persons.

6.2 Procedure masks may be provided at a screening point or by the specific program or site if there is no screening area.
6.3 If an adult outpatient requires or is awaiting routine care and is unable or refuses to mask, they may be, at the discretion of the most responsible health practitioner (MRHP):
   a) offered access to virtual care if available; or
   b) receive care on-site using best efforts to keep AHS People and other patients/visitors safe.

6.4 In exceptional circumstances where an adult outpatient who is presenting for non-urgent/non-emergent care refuses to mask, they may be asked to leave an AHS facility/setting. This decision should be made by the MRHP and must be balanced with ensuring the safety of the patient and the acuity of the patient’s needs.

6.5 Adult outpatients who screen positive by answering yes to any question on the COVID-19 screening for COVID-19 symptom criteria shall be provided direction by the health care provider on appropriate masking within the care setting and in consideration of their medical condition.

7. Masking Requirements for Pediatric Patients

7.1 As a general principle, patients from three (3) to 18 years of age are expected to wear masks to appointments at AHS facilities/settings (including emergency departments, urgent care centres, and outpatient clinics) or when visiting others at risk.
   a) 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.
   b) For those children over three (3) years of age who can tolerate a procedure mask, provide a child-appropriate procedure mask or an adult procedure 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.

7.2 For 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, parent’s/guardian’s arms), and faced towards the parent/guardian to minimize droplet spread.

7.3 AHS advises that only one (1) designated family/support person accompany a child to scheduled visits.
   a) 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.
b) If the designated family/support person is unable or refuses to wear a mask, refer to Section 8 below.

7.4 Families should maintain two (2) metres of physical distance from others and try to prevent children from wandering.

8. Masking Requirements for Designated Family/Support Persons

8.1 All designated family/support persons when entering an AHS facility/setting shall be asked to perform hand hygiene, and will be provided with and asked to wear a procedure mask. The mask should be worn for the duration of their visit.

8.2 All designated family/support persons who screen positive by answering yes to any question on the COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire for Acute Care or Continuing Care shall be provided direction by the health care provider on appropriate masking within the care setting and in consideration of the patient's medical condition.

8.3 All patients requiring health care shall not be refused care if their designated family/support person is unable or refuses to mask.

a) For those designated family/support persons who are unable or refuse to mask, the health care team should work collaboratively with them to find the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation, as per the AHS How to Support Mask Wearing COVID-19 Worker Supports.

9. Masking Requirements for Families and Visitors

9.1 All families and visitors when entering an AHS facility/setting shall be asked to perform hand hygiene, and will be provided with and asked to wear a procedure mask. The mask should be worn for the duration of their visit.

9.2 If families and visitors respond yes to any question on the COVID-19 Screening Questionnaire for Acute Care or Continuing Care:

a) a health care provider shall provide instructions on isolation and the online AHS COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool for Albertans, or to call Health Link at 811 to arrange for testing; and

b) the patient's family or visitor may be advised to leave the AHS facility/setting.

9.3 If families or visitors are unable to mask, the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation shall be sought, as per the AHS How to Support Mask Wearing COVID-19 Worker Supports.

9.4 Families or visitors who refuse to mask shall not be allowed to visit.

a) If these families or visitors refuse to comply, site processes should be followed, which may include notification to Protective Services (if on-site)
or to local Police (if appropriate), at the discretion of the Site Leader or designate.

10. Documentation

10.1 The health care provider should document discussions and the provision of alternate patient services (if applicable) on the patient’s health record, as appropriate.

a) Documentation should include any concerns or noteworthy circumstances regarding the patient and visitation, including the designated family/support person, as applicable.

DEFINITIONS

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) facility means any facility, property, or ground owned, operated, leased, or funded by AHS.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) setting means 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.

Designated family/support person means the individual(s) identified by the patient that they want involved in their health planning and decisions. They can be a relative, legal guardian, close friend, and/or informal caregiver (see Designated Family/Support Person and Visitation Guidance for details regarding this role).

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.

Health record means the collection of all records documenting individually identifying health information in relation to a single person.

Most responsible health practitioner (MRHP) means the health practitioner who has responsibility and accountability for the specific treatment/procedure(s) provided to a patient and who is authorized by AHS to perform the duties required to fulfill the delivery of such a treatment/procedure(s) within the scope of their practice.
DIRECTIVE

USE OF MASKS DURING COVID-19

November 6, 2020

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 Relaunch Playbook
  - COVID-19 Designated Family/Support and Visitation Guidance
  - Daily Designated Family Support and Visitor Screening Questionnaire in Acute Care
  - Designated Family/Support Person and Visitor Screening Questionnaire for Continuing Care Facilities
  - Designated Family/Support Access and Visitation in Designated Living Option and Hospice Setting During COVID-19 Directive
  - Designated Family/Support Access and Visitation in Acute Care, Ambulatory and Emergency Sites Directive
  - Family Support & Visitation of Patients & Residents
  - Fit for Work
  - Guidance to Help Make Continuous Masking Work for You
  - Guidelines for Continuous Masking and Use of Face Shields in Home Care and Congregate Living Settings
  - Guidelines for Continuous Masking
  - Information for Albertans
  - Interim IPC Recommendations COVID-19
  - IPC Guidance for Resuming Ambulatory Care Clinics
  - novel coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) novel coronavirus (COVID-19)
  - Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA)

- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
  - Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Order 29-2020
  - Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Order 27-2020
  - Children mask? How to fit adult mask to kids
  - COVID-19 Info for Albertans Symptoms and Testing
  - COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool

© 2020, Alberta Health Services, Policy Services

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International license. The licence does not apply to AHS trademarks, logos or content for which Alberta Health Services is not the copyright owner. This material is intended for general information only and is provided on an "as is", "where is" basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. This material is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional. Alberta Health Services expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.