

Frequently Asked Questions

Updates to continuous masking for COVID-19

June 2023

1. Why is this directive being rescinded?

- Effective June 19, 2023 AHS is rescinding the Use of Masks During COVID-19 Directive.
- The decision to rescind the current requirement for continuous masking was made based on several factors, including declining COVID-19, testing positivity rate, wastewater data and hospital admission rates for respiratory illnesses in Alberta.
- As always, all staff are encouraged to [stay home when ill](#), and continue to practice good hand hygiene as part of ongoing efforts to keep patients, families and each other safe and healthy.

2. Who does this directive apply to?

- This applies to all patients, families, and visitors at AHS facilities, as well as Alberta Precision Laboratories, Covenant Health, CapitalCare, and Carewest sites. It also applies to all AHS and contracted staff, including physicians, midwives, students, volunteers, and contractors.

3. Where do I need to wear a mask?

- To protect staff and others from the transmission illnesses, workers should continue to use [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions](#) as required by the [IPC Risk Assessment](#) to make personal protective equipment (PPE) decisions.
- Continuous masking will be required when:
 - Directed by an outbreak protocol,
 - Identified by the [Attending Work with COVID-19 Symptoms or a Positive COVID-19 Test](#),
 - The IPC Risk Assessment indicates it as a control
- Appropriate types of masks and PPE will continue to be available in all settings for patients and healthcare workers.

4. Have all requirements regarding respiratory protection been removed?

- No. Respiratory protection should be used based on the hazards presented by the workplace. Refer to your [Hazard Identification, Assessment and Control](#) (HIAC) and your [IPC Risk Assessment](#) to determine what PPE is required for your specific role.

5. I do not feel comfortable removing my mask at work. Am I required to remove my mask?

- AHS continues to respect the choice to voluntarily wear a mask in all areas and encourages those who want to wear a mask to continue to wear one.

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6. A patient has requested that I mask, however I do not want to mask at work anymore. What do I do?

- Healthcare providers are asked to mask when requested by patients to do so.
- We encourage workers to discuss masking, hand hygiene or other factors patient feel are important to their care.
- Vulnerable patients such as immunosuppressed individuals will receive identification to display to their care providers so care providers know to mask.
- Signage will be available for posting in staff and patient areas.
- Any concerns should be addressed with the care team and manager as appropriate.
- As more information becomes available, we will continue to update this section.

7. Do I need to mask if I am returning to work after a five-day work restriction due to testing positive for COVID-19 or having COVID-19 symptoms?

- Please refer to the [Attending Work with COVID-19 Symptoms or a Positive COVID-19 Test](#) and the corresponding [FAQ](#) for further guidance.

8. Will I still have to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

- Yes, mandatory PPE is still required in situations where direct care is provided. Please refer to the AHS [IPC Risk Assessment](#) for all PPE decisions.
- Requirements for PPE as dictated by local [Hazard Identification, Assessment and Control](#) (HIAC) and safe work procedures do not change.

9. Will continuous masking be considered in the future?

- Any guidance regarding future continuous masking requirements will be based on several factors including, public safety, situational context, data and evidence, hospital impacts and engagement with the workforce and key stakeholders

10. There has been an outbreak declared at my site. What do I do?

- Follow directions from the outbreak management team.
- Outbreak prevention and management protocols must be followed.
- Outbreak measures may include continuous masking.

11. I have more questions. Who do I contact?

- Email ppe@ahs.ca or contact your HRBP Advisor or WHSBP Advisor if you have additional questions.