

April 20, 2020

RE:
**PROCEDURAL
MASKS**

We continue to hear many concerns from our members regarding the new “Vanch” procedural masks that AHS procured and distributed across the Province last week to meet demands related to the new continuous masking guidelines. Concerns include odour, skin and throat irritation, headaches, poor fit, nose pinch and retention. We continue to raise these concerns directly with AHS.

In a meeting with UNA today, AHS indicated the following regarding this matter:

None of the preferred Primed PM-PG-1211 procedural masks have been sent to other Provinces.

They continue to receive shipments of the preferred Primed PM-PG-1211, which continue to be made available on supply carts for most units, but the manufacturer is unable to supply enough of these masks to keep up with the overall demand for procedural masks within Alberta, so they have had to look at sourcing from other suppliers.

Some programs/units have started prioritizing the preferred Primed PM-PG-1211 procedural masks for direct care with suspect or confirmed COVID-19 patients and other patients on isolation.

They are not in a position to pull the Vanch product as they currently do not have adequate alternative supply of other procedural masks to meet the unanticipated demand that currently exists in Alberta related to introduction of the continuous masking guidelines. The current burn rate of procedural masks across Alberta, is approximately 600,000/per day.

They are working with the manufacturer of the Vanch masks to try and address the issues with size and nose pinch/fit that have been identified. They believe the odour issue has been addressed by AHS warehouse staff unpacking the masks to let the odour dissipate before they are sent to sites.

They continue to try and procure other types of acceptable alternative procedural masks, including expecting large orders (in the millions) of new types of procedural masks by the end of April.

In light of the aforementioned information, we are advising our members as follows:

UNA members that work for AHS or Covenant Health should continue to report any issues/concerns with PPE products you are provided, including the new Vanch masks, through the normal AHS CPSM reporting process on AHS Insite here: <https://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/cpsm/Page5995.aspx>

Consider reporting patient safety concerns related to PPE through the PRC process and employee safety concerns through the OHS process, as outlined in your Collective Agreement.

As per the Joint Statement on PPE for COVID-19, "a point-of-care risk-assessment (PCRA) must be performed before every patient interaction. If a health care worker determines on reasonable grounds that specific PPE is required, they shall have access to the appropriate PPE based on their PCRA, and this will not be unreasonably denied by their employer, or they shall be deployed to another area." Full Joint Statement: https://www.una.ca/files/uploads/2020/3/2020-03-26_AHS_Covenant_Unions_Joint_Statement_on_PPE.pdf

Based on your PCRA, consider using or requesting the Primed PM-PG-1211 procedural masks for direct care with any suspect or confirmed COVID-19 patients or any other patients on isolation, or if you are unable to tolerate or safely wear any alternative type of procedural mask you are provided with.

Based on your PCRA, consider requesting an N95 mask if you are not provided with an adequate procedural mask for direct care of suspect or confirmed COVID-19 patients or any other patients on isolation.

If you are asked to use the Vanch procedural mask to meet the continuous masking guidelines in your work area, ensure you are changing it when soiled/wet, at break time, when fit/nose retention are not adequate, or if you are experiencing any adverse health issues from wearing it.

Should you be experiencing adverse health issues such as rashes, itching, headaches or other symptoms as a result of wearing Vanch or any other PPE products, you have the right to make a WCB claim, you will need to have medical support. In making a WCB claim you do not have to miss time from work, you can make a no loss time claim. The employer does not decide on the adjudication of the claim, WCB is to adjudicate the claim on an individual basis.