

CATEGORY:	ORGANIZATIONAL/INFECTION CONTROL/COMMUNICABLE DISEASE
SUB-CATEGORY:	INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL
GROUP:	
DISTRIBUTION:	ALL STAFF
TITLE:	MASK USAGE AT WESTERN HEALTH DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PURPOSE

Current evidence suggests COVID-19 is primarily transmitted between individuals through respiratory droplets and close contact. Droplet transmission occurs when an individual is in close contact with an infected individual and exposure to potentially infective respiratory droplets occurs, for example, through coughing, sneezing, or very close personal contact. Transmission of COVID-19 can occur directly by contact with infected individuals, or indirectly by contact with surfaces or objects present in the immediate environment of the infected individual. There is also emerging evidence to suggest that asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic, or minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit COVID-19.

Medical mask usage is part of a comprehensive package of the prevention and control measures that can limit the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing, environmental cleaning, and adherence to the [Hand Hygiene Policy \(11-01-10\)](#) are also essential.

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction to all staff, physicians, volunteers and representatives who enter Western Health Facilities on the requirements for mask usage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

POLICY

To reduce the risk of viral transmission and in accordance with the [Newfoundland and Labrador's Guideline for Prioritization and Use of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) in Pandemic COVID-19 in Low Prevalence Period and Increasing or Widespread Community Prevalence Period](#)

1. All staff, physicians and representatives must wear a rated medical mask at all times when in client/patient/resident care areas.

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2. All staff, physicians and representatives who provide direct client/patient/resident care must wear a rated medical mask at all times while working. This includes working in the clients home in addition to Western Health facilities.
3. All staff, physicians, and representatives must wear a procedural or rated medical mask when in common areas within any Western Health facility.
4. Western Health will supply acceptable face masks for use on its premises. Homemade cloth face coverings are not to be worn as an acceptable mask for use at Western Health at this time.

DEFINITIONS

Close contact – contact within six feet or two meters of another individual for greater than or equal to 15 minutes.

Common Area – A space that is generally open and accessible to people within and/or outside of the organization. Common areas include but are not limited to entrances, hallways, stairwells, large open concept office spaces, cafeterias, care stations, elevators, meeting rooms, staff lounges and foyers.

Direct client/patient/resident care – Any aspect of the health care of a client/patient/resident including but not limited to diagnostic testing, treatments, counselling, self-care, patient education and medication administration.

Client/Patient/Resident Care area – any area of the facility where client/patient/resident care occurs, and where clients/patients/residents are present. This includes but is not limited to care units, offices where counseling occurs, outpatient clinics, diagnostic imaging, resident dining rooms, etc.

Representatives – individuals who enter Western Health facilities to complete required work but are not employees. This may include volunteers, clergy, contractors, students, individuals working at the organization but funded through an external source, etc.

Rated Medical Mask – often referred to as a medical or surgical mask. A rated mask is tested according to a set of standardized test methods and provides protection from contamination to the client/patient/resident and the clinician.

PROCEDURE

Masks are required to be worn when entering and exiting all facilities within Western Health. When exiting the facility for the day, it is suggested that the mask be worn until

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outside of the facility. Before leaving the work area, it is suggested that a clean mask be taken and safely stored for donning upon entering the facility for the next shift. A clean mask can be placed in a clean disposable bag for safe storage. For information regarding the distribution of masks, please contact your manager or designate.

A rated medical mask is to be worn at all times while working in client/patient/resident care areas. The mask requires changing if it becomes wet, damaged or soiled, and is to be worn for a maximum of 12 hours.

A mask is required to be worn at all times when in public and common areas of Western Health facilities such as hallways, cafeterias, entrances, lounges, and elevators, etc.

When eating or drinking, the mask may be removed but physical distancing of two meters from others, including colleagues in the same department, will be maintained.

Masks are not required to be worn by staff, physicians and representatives while in their private workspace if it is outside of a care area and physical distancing of two meters is able to be maintained from others, including colleagues in the same department.

For directions on how to wear a mask safely, see Appendix A, How to Wear a Mask.

Exemptions

If a staff member, physician, or representative is unable to wear a mask for medical reasons, medical documentation is required and will be provided to the manager or designate. Follow up with the Director of Employee Wellness Health and Safety is required, to determine if a medical accommodation should and can be arranged, in keeping with the [Disability Accommodation policy \(3-05-30\)](#).

If working with the hearing impaired, or providing treatment which requires visualization of facial expressions of the health care provider, provided that the client has a negative COVID-19 screen and is asymptomatic, an alternative measure can be used so that masks do not need to be worn during the appointment/treatment. In this case the health care provider can wear a clear face shield which covers to below the chin. See [Guidance for Clients who Cannot Mask](#) for more information. Another option to reduce the risk of infection transmission is to install a physical plexiglass barrier in the workspace between the client and health care provider, where applicable and appropriate.

GUIDELINES

[Newfoundland and Labradors Guideline for Prioritization and Use of Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) in Pandemic COVID-19 in Low Prevalence Period and Increasing or Widespread Community Prevalence Period](#)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – How to Wear a Mask

KEY WORDS

COVID-19

MASK

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

TO BE COMPLETED BY STAFF IN QUALITY DEPARTMENT

Approved By: Chief Executive Officer	Maintained By: Regional Director – Professional Practice
Effective Date: 17/August/2020	<input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed: <input type="checkbox"/> Revised: <i>(Date of most recent changes to the policy)</i>
Review Date: 17/August/2023	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces: <i>(Indicates name and number of policy being replaced)</i> OR <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New

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Appendix A
How to Wear a Mask

How to Wear a Mask



1

Clean your hands with hand sanitizer.

2

Apply the mask coloured side facing out, so it is covering your nose and mouth.

3

Ensure the wire piece is secured at the top of your nose.

4

Once the mask is on, do not touch your face or the mask.

5

Clean your hands with hand sanitizer after removing the mask.