

## Frequently Asked Questions | Non-Medical Mask Use

Every day, in all health-care settings and situations, Manitobans are relying upon basic infection prevention and control measures to prevent the spread of infection from patient to patient, from patient to staff, from staff to patient, and from staff to staff.

As COVID-19 is expected to be a part of our 'new normal' efforts are underway to find a longer-term balance between preventing the spread of this virus and ensuring we are able to ensure safe interaction between patients and their loved ones.

Adherence to public health guidelines (e.g. Physical distancing, hand hygiene and staying home when sick) remain our best defense against the spread of this virus.

**As we approach respiratory season, all health care facilities in Manitoba are preparing to implement a requirement that all visitors wear non-medical masks for the duration of their visit(s).**

When worn properly, a person wearing a non-medical mask can reduce the spread of his or her own infectious respiratory droplets.

### About these Guidelines

#### 1. Who do these guidelines apply to?

These guidelines apply to **all visitors** to health care facilities, including **designated support persons, general visitors, tradespeople and vendors, and outpatients** attending medical appointments.

Visitors and outpatients will be asked to bring their own mask. In exceptional circumstances, (e.g. emergency situations or equity considerations) a mask may be provided by the facility.

**Leadership** (executive, directors and managers) are also encouraged to wear non-medical masks during travel within a facility, even where physical distancing (6 feet/2 metres) is possible to maintain. Leadership will be asked to bring their own mask.

#### 2. Who do these guidelines NOT apply to?

All visitors who enter a health-care facility will be expected to wear a non-medical mask with the exception of children under the age of two (2) and those determined on a case-by-case basis to be exempt for medical reasons (e.g., severe C.O.P.D, breathing or cognitive difficulties, or a disability that prevents them from safely wearing a mask).

Individuals who are unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person are similarly exempted. These individuals must maintain physical distancing at all times.

Individuals may also temporarily remove their mask while in a hospital or health care facility for the following purposes:

- To receive a service that requires the removal of their mask;
- To consume food or drink;
- To deal with an emergency or medical purpose; or
- To establish their identity.

### 3. Do we provide a procedure mask or other PPE?

Visitors and outpatients will be asked to bring their own mask.

Exceptions exist for some visitors and/or outpatients who may be required to wear medical PPE at the direction of the care team (e.g. visitors who are essential travelers). This will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Contact your site supervisor.

### 4. What about staff?

Staff are strongly encouraged to bring and wear their own non-medical masks for use when passing through health-care facilities, (e.g. in hallways and other areas where patients may be present) even if physical distancing is able to be maintained.

This recommendation **does not** replace the need for appropriate use of facility-provided PPE. It also does not replace the need for ongoing vigilance and adherence to public health advice and infection prevention and control protocols (e.g. proper hand hygiene, physical distancing and the need to stay home when ill).

### 5. When will this requirement take effect? At which health care facilities?

This requirement will take effect September 1, 2020 at all inpatient health care facilities and hybrid sites. Mask use will be strongly recommended in all health-care settings with ongoing consideration of expanding the requirement as needed.

This requirement does not extend to fee for service primary care clinics.

**Note:** At health care facilities within the Prairie Mountain Health Region, masks are mandatory effective August 24, 2020 as a result of the region's ORANGE Pandemic Response Level.

#### **4. Why do COVID-19 guidelines keep changing and what is driving the changes?**

Guidelines are evolving as the research and advice of experts changes. We have relied upon the carefully researched advice of our experts in infection prevention and control, occupational and environmental health and safety and clinical leadership as well as public health direction. We also incorporate information from available and emerging evidence and the learnings gathered from other jurisdictions to ensure our recommendations are safe and appropriate.

#### **5. Could the guidelines change again?**

Yes, as new research becomes available, these guidelines could change again.

### **Escalation**

#### **1. What happens if the visitor is not wearing a mask and does not have a mask?**

If the visitor is not aware of the requirement, refer to the [Algorithm Process for Managing Visitors who Present to Points of Entry](#). Politely inform them of the requirement and offer direction on where they may access a non-medical mask nearby.

If the situation is an emergency and/or if the individual indicates equity reasons for not having a mask, refer to site guidelines for providing a non-medical mask for their use.

Medical masks are only to be provided in exceptional situations where the circumstances of the visitor and/or patient being visited require their use. Refer to [COVID-19 Inpatient Visitation Principles](#) for more information. In these instances, staff will provide both the mask and information on its appropriate use.

Exceptions exist for transport workers or essential travelers. Visits by individuals whose work may require travel outside of Manitoba, making them unable to pass screening requirements related to travel, may require a medical mask to be used during their visit. If that is the case, a medical mask and directions on its use will be provided by staff. Contact your site supervisor/manager responsible to assess situation specific details.

#### **2. What happens if the visitor refuses to wear a mask for non-medical reasons?**

Use of a non-medical mask is required during all visits to health-care facilities. Visitors and/or outpatients or others who refuse to wear a mask and who are not exempted from the requirement due to a medical condition should be treated with compassion and respect. Extenuating circumstances should be escalated as detailed in the facility's escalation process for consideration on a case-by-case basis by the facility.

Those who are not deemed to have a valid reason for not wearing a mask will be politely denied entry.

Patients who require urgent or emergent care will not be refused entry and will be provided with a medical mask if appropriate.

### **3. Does this requirement apply to outdoor visits?**

No. Wearing of a non-medical mask during outdoor visits is not required, but is encouraged.

### **4. Where can I find more information on wearing and caring for masks?**

Please refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

Directions on the appropriate care and use of non-medical masks are also available to print or share with visitors by referring to: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/non-medical-mask-poster.pdf>.

## **General**

### **1. How is a non-medical mask correctly used?**

Non-medical masks should allow for easy breathing, fit securely to the head with ties or ear loops and be large enough to completely and comfortably cover the nose and mouth without gaping. Masks should not be shared and must be changed if they become damp or dirty.

Public Health Agency of Canada information on non-medical masks is available by referring to <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>