

## MEMO

Adapted for Southern Health-  
Santé Sud – March 22, 2021

**Date:** January 6, 2021 - **UPDATED March 15, 2021**

**To:** SDO Leadership

**From:** **Dr. Brent Roussin**, Chief Provincial Public Health Officer  
**Lanette Siragusa**, Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health

**Subject:** **COVID-19 – Inpatient Use of Procedure Masks**

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The wearing of masks in indoor public spaces, including public areas of health care facilities, has been a requirement for visitors, outpatients, vendors and contractors since September 1, 2020. With ongoing high levels of COVID-19 in our community, Infection Prevention & Control continue to recommend that everyone present in a health care facility should wear a mask, including inpatients.

Use of a facility-provided procedure mask is recommended for all inpatients able to tolerate wearing a face mask. Exceptions exist for inpatients who are medically unable to wear a mask, including but not limited to:

- patients with significant respiratory disease where the mask results in increased dyspnea or oxygenation issues;
- facial injuries/infections that would preclude effective wearing of a mask;
- children under the age of five (5);
- individuals who are non-compliant (e.g. those for whom the provider would have to repeatedly and frequently provide a new mask due to the patient removing and/or discarding it);
- individuals who are unable to put on – or remove – their own mask.

For those inpatients able to tolerate wearing a face mask, one should be worn at all times when it is necessary for them to leave their room, whether they are going for a walk around the unit, to a medical test or appointment off the unit, or to get a coffee or go outside. The patient should also be encouraged to wear the mask in their room whenever health-care workers are in the room and physical distancing of 6 feet from the patient is not able to be maintained throughout the interaction.

Patients who are accommodated in a multi-patient room with a shared washroom should wear a mask when using the washroom.

Inpatients should be provided with two masks per day as well as a paper bag in which

to store the mask between uses for a maximum of one day. Care teams should emphasize the importance of hand hygiene before and after any contact with the face mask as well as the continued importance of maintaining physical distancing from others.

Masks should be replaced when visibly soiled, wet or damaged.

Attached is a letter that can be provided to patients and their families. Patients able to tolerate wearing a mask are to be notified that they will be provided with two masks per day which should be worn for the entire time they are away from their room, unless instructed by staff to remove it in order to receive care. The mask should also be worn when approved visitors (e.g. essential care partners) and health-care workers are present in the patient's room.

SDOs/Facilities are asked to develop an escalation process to manage circumstances where an inpatient may refuse to wear a mask for a non-medical reason.

Masks may be removed in designated meal areas (e.g. cafeterias) or smoking areas provided physical distancing can be maintained and hand hygiene is performed.

### **Orange and Red Zones inpatients – No change**

Medical masks required, follow current process.

### **Outpatients, Visitors, Essential Care Partners**

Essential Care Partners and outpatients must wear a medical mask for the entire duration of their visit and may be directed to wear additional medical PPE by the care team/facility.

Thank you for your support in sharing this information with patients and their families.

### **Change log:**

#### **March 15, 2021:**

- Inpatient will now receive two masks per day
- Essential Care Partners will be provided with a medical mask