

Wearing face masks: a guide for Trust colleagues working in patient facing roles in hospital and community settings

In line with government advice, from Monday 15 June 2020 we are asking all colleagues in patient facing roles, who work in hospital or community settings, to wear a fluid-repellent surgical face mask when in areas where patient facing activity is taking place.

This will ensure we are compliant with national guidance from 15 June, when this recommendation comes into place across the country.

In line with government advice, guidance about the use of *face coverings* has been developed for colleagues who work in non-hospital or non-patient facing settings. That separate guidance should be read in conjunction with this guide.

This guide is for colleagues who work in **patient facing roles in hospital and community settings**.

What does this guidance mean?

Whilst it is still really important to social distance (see below), from Monday 15 June 2020 colleagues in patient facing roles, who work in hospital or community settings must now wear a surgical face mask.

This can be removed when you go to work in an office on your own – but must be properly put back on when you are in a patient facing area, in an office or room with colleagues, or in direct interaction with our patients.

The guidance includes details on how to effectively wear a surgical face mask and how these should be put on and taken off.

Please also refer to the Trust's PPE guidance, available on our Coronavirus resource page on our [website](#).

What about our patients?

Our inpatients will be offered a face mask if appropriate, following an individual risk assessment.

In our community based services, patients will be offered a mask if they attend for an appointment and are not wearing an appropriate mask or face covering.

Guidance regarding use of a face mask

A few simple rules:

- A single mask can be used for between six and eight hours.
- Replace the mask if it becomes damp or soiled.
- The mask should never be worn under the chin.
- The mask is single-use, once you unhook it from your ears and take it off, it must be disposed of immediately.
- Never touch the front of the mask other than very top to mould it to your nose and the very bottom to ensure it covers your face.

Putting the mask on:

- Clean your hands before touching the mask and then inspect it for damage
- Identify the right way the mask should go (usually the white side should make contact with your face and the coloured side should be external)
- Holding the mask by the elastic sides place the mask on your face, covering your mouth and nose, and securing the elastic behind your ears.
- Pinch the strip across the top of the mask to ensure it is moulded to your nose and pull the very bottom to extend it to cover your face.

Taking a drink

- If you need to have a drink, you can do so without replacing the mask.
- First, unhook the mask on one side from your ear, pull it forward about 90 degrees away from your face, take a drink and secure the elastic behind your ear again.
- Ensure it is moulded to your nose again and finally wash your hands.

Taking the mask off:

- Clean your hands before attempting to take the mask off
- Lean forward and remove the elastic sides from behind your ears and pull forward. Do not touch the mask itself.
- Dispose in an appropriate bin (ensure it is not overflowing or likely to contaminate anyone emptying the bin at a later time)

Can I take any masks home?

Please do not take any supplies of PPE home. We have to be extremely careful with our supplies to ensure we can keep both colleagues and patients safe. We will also be asking managers to do regular stock-takes to ensure that areas are proportionately using stocks of masks.

PPE is not required outside of the workplace but colleagues may choose to wear face coverings in other settings. For example, this is currently required when using public transport. These face covering need to be obtained separately.

How do I get my face masks?

Type 2 surgical masks are already supplied to each ward and service via a PPE lead from our central Trust PPE team. If you are unsure about where masks are locally stored and distributed within your workplace, then please contact your PPE lead, who will be able to advise, or your line manager.

Why are we making this change now?

The Government believes that introducing this change will help further manage the reduction in COVID-19 cases and prevent a second wave of infection.

By adopting the widespread usage of masks, we will be able to further minimise any potential outbreaks of COVID-19 amongst patients and colleagues, particularly those colleagues working in patient facing areas in which it is difficult to keep a social distance of two metres.

Social distancing and good infection control is the most important protection we all have.

Everyday guidance:

- Keep your social distance of 2 metres wherever possible
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds each time
- Use hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available.

We will continue to update our website to include visiting information as well as sharing content on social media to promote messages to the public.

If you have any questions about how this guidance should be interpreted for your team, please speak to your manager or contact the Incident Management Team through the Communications team: dhcft.communications@nhs.net



Image of surgical mask, as referred to in this guidance

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