


Guidance Document for COVID-19



Thunder Bay Regional
Health Sciences
Centre

Title: Inpatient and Outpatient Mandatory Masking	Version #: 4
Approved: COVID-19 Lead Signature: 	Approval Date: December 15, 2021
<i>This document is intended to provide guidance to staff/professional staff during COVID-19</i>	

1. PURPOSE

To clarify expectations during the COVID-19 pandemic, related to notifying all patients of and enforcing mandatory masking for hospital inpatients and outpatients.

2. GUIDELINES (e.g. background, definitions, procedure, etc.)

Background

In response to provincial regulations governing the use of masks in different public zones enacted under the Reopening Ontario Act, 2020, the Hospital requires that all occupants, including inpatients and outpatients, wear a hospital-issued procedure mask in accordance with this guideline.

Procedure

- i. As far in advance of an admission as possible, (provide the patient with the mandatory masking letter and) or an outpatient appointment, communicate the following information to the patient:

“Masks are mandatory while inside the Hospital. Even if you provide documentation from a Doctor or Nurse Practitioner indicating that you are unable to wear a mask due to a health condition, your attending physician at our Hospital will need to verify this. Only written medical documentation, such as a signed letter from primary care provider, provided by and verified by your attending physician ensures you access to the Hospital without a mask. You will be provided with a procedure mask when you arrive at the Hospital and will be able to replace it daily and when it becomes damaged, soiled or dirty.”

- ii. Reinforce that all patients (unless they meet an exception to mandatory masking listed below) wear a hospital-issued procedure mask in a fashion that appropriately covers the nose and mouth at all times. The only times when it is acceptable for a patient to not wear a procedure mask include when:
 - a. Alone in a private room, or alone in their personal bed-space with the curtain drawn. If anyone enters the room or bed-space, the patient must immediately don the procedure mask. A patient who removes their mask to consume food or drink only does so if they are alone in a private room, or alone in their personal bed-space with the curtain drawn.

- b. Alone in a patient bathroom when the door is closed. The patient must wear the procedure mask when traveling to and from the bathroom
 - c. Instructed by a member of their healthcare team to remove the procedure mask as a requirement to facilitate a medical test or procedure.
 - d. Replacing a procedure mask because it has become soiled or damaged. The mask should only be removed if the patient is greater than 2 metres from others and a replacement must immediately be put on. The mask should be replaced daily and whenever it becomes damaged or soiled.
- III. If an inpatient or outpatient who does not meet an exception (see below), is seen not wearing a mask and is in a situation where a mask is required, implement the following steps:
- a. Provide the patient with a gentle reminder of the importance of wearing a mask and how to appropriately wear a mask. Document in the chart.
 - b. If the patient refuses to wear a mask despite the reminder, ensure the patient maintains 2m distance from others (e.g., have the patient return to their bed space / room).
 - c. Confirm with the attending physician whether the patient can be treated outside of the hospital.
 - i. If the patient can be treated outside of the hospital, provide the patient with the **patient mask refusal letter** and discuss the consequence of continued refusal. If the patient continues to refuse, discharge the patient. If necessary, contact Security. Document in the chart.
 - ii. If the patient cannot be treated outside of the hospital, require that the patient wear a face-shield in lieu of a procedure mask. Document in the chart.
- iv. If an inpatient or outpatient is repeatedly reminded to wear a mask and it is felt that their compliance requires continuous reinforcement, follow the steps outlined in c above.
- v. If a patient directed to wear a face-shield in lieu of a procedure mask refuses to wear it notify the attending physician and bring forward to IMT for decision on how to proceed.
- vi. If a patient meets an exception to masking (see below) and is either not required to wear a mask or wears a face-shield in lieu of a procedure mask, take all of the necessary precautions to minimize the risk the unmasked patient imposes on others and the risks being unmasked poses to the patient. For example, minimize the accumulative duration of any interactions with the unmasked patient, ensure the unmasked patient takes the most direct route if required to travel, and ensure anyone who comes within 2m of the unmasked patient is wearing a procedure mask and eye protection.

Exceptions to inpatient and outpatients mandatory masking

I. Verified Medical Condition Exclusion

- i. If a patient identifies that they have documentation from a Medical Doctor (MD) or Nurse Practitioner (NP) indicating that they are unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition (i.e., in accordance with the accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005, or the Human Rights Code), as far in advance of the admission as possible, arrange for the medical documentation to be reviewed and verified by the attending physician. Only medical conditions verified by the attending physician are allowable.
- ii. If a patient has a letter from an MD or NP indicating that the patient has a medical condition that has been verified by the attending physician, require the patient to wear a face shield in lieu of a procedure mask. Take all of the necessary precautions to minimize the risk the unmasked patient imposes on others and the risks being unmasked poses to the patient.

II. Age Exclusion

- vii. If a patient is 2 years or younger, they are not required to wear a mask. Take all of the necessary precautions to minimize the risk the unmasked patient imposes on others and the risks being unmasked poses to the patient.

III. Safety Exclusion

- viii. If a patient requires help from someone else to put on or remove a face covering, they are not required to wear a procedure mask. If possible, it is encouraged that they wear a face shield in lieu of a mask. Take all of the necessary precautions to minimize the risk the unmasked patient imposes on others and the risks being unmasked poses to the patient.

IV. Forensic and Mental Health Exclusion

- ix. If a patient is admitted in the Forensic Mental Health unit they are not required to wear a procedure mask. Take all of the necessary precautions to minimize the risk the unmasked patient imposes on others and the risks being unmasked poses to the patient. Patients are required to wear a mask anytime they are off the unit.
- x. If a patient is admitted to Adult Mental Health or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health unit exceptions will be identified by the most responsible physician in consultation with the interdisciplinary team.

3. RELATED POLICIES, PRACTICES AND/OR LEGISLATIONS

Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, S.O. 2020, c. 17. Available:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/20r17>

4. REFERENCES

Alberta Health Services. Primary Care Networks Incident Response Task Force. Patient Refusal to Wear Face Coverings during COVID-19: Guidance for Community Physicians and Teams.

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Available: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-community-physicians-patient-refusal-to-wear-face-cover.pdf>

Timmins and District Hospital. Guidelines for Management of Mandatory Masking during COVID-19. Internal Communication.

University Health Network. Universal Masking Policy at UHN. Information for patients coming to UHN for appointments or Treatment and Essential Care Partners. Last updated: November 23, 2020. Accessible: https://www.uhn.ca/Covid19/Pages/masking_policy.aspx