

<b>Title: Mask Policy for SAH Workers</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy & Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Procedure Only <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol Only
<b>Policy Type:</b>		<b>Category</b>
Corporate		Corporate Safety
Approval Authority: VP Transformation and Partnerships		
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Distribution: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hospital-Wide		
Related Policies: Infection Control Policies II-15 and II-25		
Keywords: Respiratory Illness, Mask		
<b>NOTE:</b> This is a CONTROLLED DOCUMENT. A printed copy of this document may not reflect the current version; always check against the electronic version prior to use.		

**Policy:**

The safety and well-being of our health care workers (HCWs), patients, and visitors at Sault Area Hospital (SAH) is paramount. By wearing a mask, we can work together to prevent the unknowing transmission of respiratory illness.

**At all times**, HCWs are required to wear a mask:

1. When required based on Routine/Additional Precautions or based on a Point of Care Risk Assessment; **AND/OR**
2. When otherwise required due to other infection prevention and control (IPAC) requirements (e.g. outbreak units); **AND/OR**
3. When directed by Occupational Health return to work protocols (e.g. when recovering from a respiratory illness).

In addition to the requirements listed above, additional measures are required during Respiratory Season. These measures will shift seasonally based on key indicators, and the beginning and end of Respiratory Season as it relates to this policy will be determined by Occupational Health, in collaboration with the Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control.

*Respiratory Season*

HCWs will wear a mask in the following circumstances:

1. In all areas of patient care units or clinics (including nursing stations and clerical / reception desks); **EXCEPT**
  - a. In a locker room, break room, lunchroom, private office, team room, or other enclosed staff-only area;**OR**



- b. When consuming food or drink.
- 2. When providing direct patient care in any area of the hospital or any SAH site; **AND/OR**
- 3. In waiting rooms at any SAH site.

*Non-Respiratory Season*

HCWs will wear a mask in the following circumstances:

- 1. When providing direct patient care in any area of the hospital or any SAH site; **AND/OR**
- 2. When having sustained close patient contact.

At any time, Occupational Health, in collaboration with the Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control, can implement enhanced control measures (either hospital-wide, or department-specific) to prevent the transmission of respiratory illness. Changes to masking requirements will be communicated by email to all HCWs and posted on the Intranet.

Workers who have a concern about wearing a mask and/or require accommodation can talk to their Leader who will engage Human Resources to assist with this process. Examples of accommodation include, but are not limited to:

- Persons with medical conditions who cannot safely wear a mask or face covering (e.g. due to breathing difficulties, cognitive difficulties, hearing or communication difficulties);
- Persons who cannot wear or remove a mask or face covering without assistance, including people who are accommodated under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or are protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code, RSO. 1990, c.H. 19 as amended;

Workers who are experiencing any type of irritation as a result of mask use are to notify the appropriate leader, complete an Employee Incident Report and contact Occupational Health Services for evaluation.

SAH is supportive of all HCWs who continue masking in areas where not required by this policy. Masks will remain available for use in all areas. We ask all of our HCWs to be respectful and supportive of their coworkers’ personal choices regarding whether to mask when not otherwise required to do so.

**Scope:** This policy provides guidance for masking for SAH HCWs.

**Procedure:**

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

EMPLOYER

- As per the Occupational Health and Safety Act, ensure that PPE is properly used and maintained, is a proper fit, is inspected for damage or deterioration and is stored in a convenient, clean and sanitary location when not in use
- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance for the protection of the worker

MANAGER

- Ensure PPE is being used as prescribed
- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance for the protection of the worker

WORKER

- Comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, applicable provincial regulations and guidance in addition to SAH policies and procedures
- Wear a mask in accordance with this policy



### Obtaining a Mask:

Masks will be available near all exterior entrances, department entrances, and nursing stations.

### Donning a Mask:

- Perform hand hygiene
- Inspect mask for damage. Determine which side of the mask is the top (the side with the stiff bendable/wire edge is at the top)
- Determine which side of the mask is the front (for coloured masks, the coloured side of the mask is the outer part and should face away from you while the white side touches your face; for white masks, the outer part which you pick up from the box is the outside of the mask and should face away from you)
- Hold the mask through the ear loops with the outer side facing outwards
- Place the mask over your nose and mouth and secure to head with ear loops
- Adjust the mask to ensure the mask is covering your nose, mouth and chin
- Press the wire to conform on the bridge of the nose and face to eliminate any gaps

### Doffing and Re-Donning

- Perform hand hygiene before touching your mask
- To remove the mask, use extreme caution during removal to ensure you do not contaminate yourself
- To drink without completely removing the mask, the mask should be removed by one ear loop and pulled away from the face with one hand while the other holds the drink. It can be replaced after drinking by re-looping over-ear
- To eat, the mask will need to be removed entirely and stored safely in a brown paper bag or on a clean piece of paper towel
- Remove the mask by slowly and carefully grasping both elastic pieces surrounding ear lobes and remove away from the face without contacting the front piece of the mask, which is potentially contaminated
- After removing the mask, visually inspect for contamination or damage; if contaminated or damaged, the mask should be discarded
- The mask should be stored in a brown paper bag with a paper clip with the inside part of the mask directed into the bag. Used paper bags should be discarded at the end of each shift
- To re-don the mask, first perform hand hygiene, then the ear loops are held on each side, and the mask is very carefully placed on the face without touching the front of the mask
- Avoid touching areas on the face to not self-contaminate, perform hand hygiene again after the mask has been re-donned

### What Not to do While Wearing a Mask

While wearing a mask, it is important that workers wear masks properly and refrain from the following behaviours so as to not inadvertently contaminate themselves while using their mask. If any of these behaviours occur, workers should immediately perform hand hygiene.

### DO NOT:

- Touch the front of your mask
- Wear the mask below the nose
- Leave your chin exposed
- Dangle the mask on your ear
- Wear a mask which is loose and has gaps on the side
- Wear your mask such that it only covers the tip of your nose
- Push/wear your mask on your neck



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## Supportive Data / Definitions:

<p><b>Mask:</b> A barrier to prevent droplets from an infected source from contaminating the skin and mucous membranes of the nose and mouth of the wearer, or to trap droplets expelled by the wearer, depending on the intended use. The term “mask” in this document refers to surgical masks, not to respirators. HCWs may only wear hospital-supplied masks.</p>	<p><b>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):</b> One element in the hierarchy of controls. PPE consists of gowns, gloves, masks, facial protection (e.g. masks and eye protection, goggles, face shields, or masks with visor attachment), or respirators that can be used by HCWs to provide a barrier that will prevent potential exposure to infectious microorganisms.</p>
<p><b>Respiratory Season:</b> Seasonal time frame where an increase in respiratory virus activity occurs. Based on key indicators, the beginning and end of Respiratory Season as it relates to this policy will be determined by Occupational Health, in collaboration with the Medical Director of Infection Prevention and Control.</p>	<p><b>Patient Care Unit:</b> Any department/unit/area where patient care is provided. Includes all inpatient and outpatient departments at the main SAH hospital site and all off-site locations.</p>
<p><b>Direct Patient Care:</b> Close physical contact with a patient (e.g. care that requires touching the patient, vital signs, physical assessments, bathing, toileting, nursing care, patient transport, etc).</p>	<p><b>Sustained Close Patient Contact:</b> Any interaction with a patient within 2 metres for 15 minutes or greater.</p>
<p><b>Health Care Worker (HCW):</b> All persons carrying on activities in the hospital, including but not limited to employees, physicians, volunteers, contractors, medical learners, students, and researchers.</p>	

## References:

Public Health Ontario (April 2023). *Interim infection prevention and control measures based on respiratory virus transmission risk in health care settings*. [https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/1/2023/ipac-measures-transmission-risks-technical-brief.pdf?rev=2e0e57d58e474ca2966deb5ae783d95c&sc\\_lang=en](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/Documents/1/2023/ipac-measures-transmission-risks-technical-brief.pdf?rev=2e0e57d58e474ca2966deb5ae783d95c&sc_lang=en)

## Revision History:

Date:	Signing Authority: Name / Title
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October 10, 2023	Shauna Hynna, VP, Transformation and Partnerships
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