

Frequently asked questions

Enhanced masking at AHS acute care facilities

The following information is meant to address questions you may have about Alberta Health Services (AHS) [Use of Masks to Prevent Transmission of Respiratory Viruses Directive](#).

1. Why is enhanced masking being implemented at my site?

- This directive supports zone and site leadership to determine if enhanced masking is necessary in acute care facilities, emergency departments, urgent care centres, and advanced ambulatory care centres in areas where patient contact may occur.
- Decisions to implement enhanced masking will be based on several factors which consider outbreak number, size and impact; new hospitalizations in people with respiratory viruses; percentage of beds occupied by patients with respiratory viruses; test positivity, and situational context.
- We are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment and will continue to closely monitor the need for changes to enhanced masking.

2. Who does this directive apply to?

- This directive applies to all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers).
- Visitors and designated support persons are only required to mask in Emergency Departments in acute care facilities where enhanced measures are implemented.

3. Where do I need to wear a mask when the directive is implemented at my site?

- AHS workers are required to mask in acute care areas where there is direct patient care.
- This includes masking in patient areas where AHS workers may come into contact with patients or that are accessible to patients, designated family/support persons including elevators/staircases/hallways, common areas, gift shops and cafeterias.
- See the [guide for making masking work for you](#). Those who are unable to mask should speak with their manager, as per the [AHS Workplace Accommodation Policy](#).

4. When else is masking required?

- AHS people are required to mask if:

- Required by a Medical Officer of Health during an outbreak according to the Communicable Disease Control Outbreak Guidelines,
 - When a masking poster is posted on patient doors,
 - Or when in contact with a severely immunocompromised individual
- Additional PPE may be required based on the [Infection Prevention and Control Risk Assessment \(IPCRA\)](#) and the [Joint Statement: COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment](#).

5. Where is masking optional?

- Wearing a mask is optional for AHS people when they are in an area where there is no contact with patients (e.g., staff break rooms/meeting rooms, corporate settings, health records departments).
- Masking is also optional in areas when enhanced masking is not in place at your site.
- Masking is optional at continuing care and Addiction and Mental Health settings that are not within an acute care facility.

7. What if an outbreak has been declared at my site?

- Outbreak measures are put in place under the [AHS Guide for Outbreak Prevention and Control in Acute Care Sites](#).
- Patients are monitored for respiratory viral symptoms such as fever/cough/runny nose at least three times daily.
- Patients who are symptomatic, based on new or changed symptoms, may be tested if recommended by their physician and placed on the appropriate IPC precautions.

8. Is physical distancing still required in areas where masking is not required?

- No, physical distancing is not required in areas where masking is not required.

9. How do I safely respond to harassment and violence when implementing enhanced masking in acute care facilities?

- Accepting harassment or violence is never part of the job.
- Having a difference of opinion is a normal and expected part of [working together](#), and each of us has personal values and beliefs that influence how we act and respond to situations.
- Stay [respectful](#) and maintain a productive and professional relationship.



10. I have more questions. Who do I contact?

- Please contact your local site leadership if you have questions.

