

**Date:** April 10, 2020

**To:** All Congregate Living Sites

**From:** Emergency Coordination Centre

**RE:** Updated Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) Guidelines during COVID-19 response

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During our response to COVID-19 in Alberta we want to make sure that our residents and staff are protected against illness as best as possible. We continue to ensure that our recommended approaches to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use across Alberta reflects the emerging evidence of COVID-19 transmission, and related risks to patients and healthcare providers.

Community spread of COVID-19 is increasing in Alberta, and there is emerging evidence that asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic or minimally symptomatic individuals can transmit COVID-19.

As such, AHS is advising all healthcare workers providing direct patient care or working in patient care areas in both AHS and community settings to wear a surgical/procedure mask continuously, at all times and in all areas of the workplace if they are either involved in direct patient contact or cannot maintain adequate social distancing from patients and co-workers.

Additionally, healthcare workers who do not work in patient care areas or have direct patient contact are only required to mask if social distancing cannot be maintained in the workplace or if entry into patient care areas is required.

Areas that can implement continuous masking immediately should be encouraged to do so. Logistics and Contracting, Procurement & Supply Management (CPSM) will be working to ensure all facilities/sites have the required supplies for full implementation of this strategy by Wednesday, April 15, 2020.

We are making these changes to protect patients from inadvertent exposure from a healthcare worker who could be without symptoms, but still infectious. This will also minimize risk of an asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic healthcare worker exposing other healthcare workers, to COVID-19 illness.

The complete guidance document related to this new approach is available now at <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/ppih/if-ppih-covid-19-ppe-continuous-use-guidance-masking.pdf>. As healthcare workers, we understand and appreciate your need to be protected in order to deliver the best care you can. These guidelines will help you in your appropriate use of surgical/procedure masks.

Please note that this does not change the requirement to use a mask, facial protection, gloves and gown if a patient has respiratory symptoms, has been diagnosed with, or is suspected to have, COVID-19. It also does not change the requirement to self-isolate when sick. Any healthcare worker with respiratory symptoms or symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 is still required to self-isolate and seek follow-up through the on-line assessment tool or 811.

Judicious use of all PPE supplies remains critical to ensuring their availability through this COVID-19 pandemic. We ask for your patience as we build distribution models and put the

logistics in place that will support a higher level of mask usage across the province. It may be a few days before all of the supplies are able to make it to the many sites and services affected by this new guidance.

As always, we strongly encourage you to ensure you are aware of and comfortable with the PPE guidance in place, to support your work on the frontlines and ensure appropriate use of all PPE. Visit [www.ahs.ca/covidppe](http://www.ahs.ca/covidppe), for full information.

Thank you for all that you are doing, to protect the health of Albertans, your colleagues and yourself.

**For community settings where PPE supplies are required, please contact:**  
[cpsmoperations.eoc@ahs.ca](mailto:cpsmoperations.eoc@ahs.ca)