

COVID-19 Protocol

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Category: Clinical Operations Finance Human Resources Logistics
 Medical Decisions Medical Staff Quality & Patient Safety (including IPAC)

Inpatient Patient Masking Policy

Protocol Purpose:

To outline TOH's position on the usage of masks by patients within inpatient units.

TOH Scope:

This Covid-19 Protocol applies to all patients admitted into an inpatient unit at TOH during the period of TOH Pandemic Operations until this period officially ends.

Inclusion Criteria (specific conditions/circumstances that must exist):

This Covid-19 Protocol applies to all inpatient patients within TOH.

This Covid-19 Protocol also applies to all long-stay patients (ie TRC) within TOH.

Exclusion Criteria (contraindications for implementing):

All inpatient patients circulating outside of their room, must wear a mask in a manner that covers their nose, mouth and chin unless they meet the exceptions listed below:

- a) Individuals with medical conditions rendering them unable to safely wear a mask, including breathing difficulties or cognitive difficulties;
- b) Individuals who are unable to apply or remove a mask without assistance, including those who are accommodated under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or who have protections under the Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19, as amended.

Protocol Details:

Background

This policy is intended for defining the process for patient masking of all inpatients outside of their rooms during the COVID-19 pandemic at The Ottawa Hospital. The principles outlined below are in alignment with the Ottawa Public Health Regulation 263/20 s.4(2)¹ – Stage 2 Closures with respect to implementing mandatory mask use. This policy will also be implemented in order to ensure the safety of both patients and staff.

Universal masking has been instituted for all employees and visitors within the hospital, as well as for all people within the community in any public area. Surgical masks (herein referred to as masks) can function either as source control (or “cough catcher”, being worn to protect others) or part of personal protective equipment (to protect the wearer). Wearing a mask is not a substitute for physical distancing as it may not provide adequate protection to the wearer.

Everyone entering the hospital, or any patient outside of their room, must wear a mask in a manner that covers their nose, mouth and chin unless they meet the exceptions listed below:

- a) Individuals with medical conditions rendering them unable to safely wear a mask, including breathing difficulties or cognitive difficulties;
- b) Individuals who are unable to apply or remove a mask without assistance, including those who are accommodated under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) or who have protections under the Ontario Human Rights Code, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.19, as amended. **No person shall be required to provide proof of any of the exemptions listed above.**

Universal Masking for Admitted Patients on Inpatient Unit

When universal mask use is indicated as a means of source control, this involves the use of a mask by all staff, patients, and visitors, at all times as outlined in this policy. To facilitate judicious and effective use of masks for source control with inpatients, the following are recommended as best practices:

- Persons wearing a mask are encouraged to practice physical distancing, maintaining at least two metres (six feet) of separation from other patients, families, and staff to prevent exposing themselves to droplets from others.
- Ideally, masks should be discarded once removed, but if supplies are limited, these may be re-used as long as they stored safely and are not visibly soiled, wet or otherwise damaged. The re-use of masks does not apply to Health Care Providers or for patients who are on additional precautions (i.e. Droplet).
- The mask is to be donned by the patient when exiting their room and can be removed when they have returned to their room.
- Hand hygiene is to be performed before donning and doffing and when handling masks.

¹ <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/resources/Documents/Instruction-Letter-to-Businesses-and-Operators-FINAL- EN.pdf>

Process

1. Each patient who is ambulatory will be provided a mask every morning and educated on how to safely wear a mask (see Appendix A) – unless they meet the exceptions listed above
2. Patient will wear their mask when exiting their room
3. Patients who do not meet exceptions listed above and are not ambulatory will be masked when they are taken from their room to attend a test or procedure
4. If patient's mask is visibly soiled, torn, or damaged they should discard the mask and request a new mask at the unit's main desk
5. The unit will limit patient movement off-ward

The use of a reusable mask is adequate for long-stay patients (ie. TRC) should the patient be asymptomatic – cloth masks should be changed daily (ideally) and laundered with hot water and regular laundry detergent

Superseded Corporate Documents:

Related Legislation or Regulatory Requirements:

Ottawa Public Health Regulation 263/20 s.4(2) – Stage 2 Closures with respect to implementing mandatory mask use

References:

Ottawa Public Health Regulation 263/20 s.4(2) – Stage 2 Closures with respect to implementing mandatory mask use: <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/resources/Documents/Instruction-Letter-to-Businesses-and-Operators-FINAL- EN.pdf>

How To Safely Wear A Mask:



Clean your hands before putting on your mask.



Always wear a clean mask (or unused mask, if disposable) for each visit.



The mask must cover both your nose and your mouth and not slide down your face.



Wear your mask the entire time you are in the hospital.



Do not touch the front of the mask while you are wearing it.



If you must remove your mask for any reason, or are removing it when you leave:



Clean your hands and remove the mask by taking it off by the ear loops or ties.



Do not touch the front of the mask or your face.



Discard disposable masks in the garbage or a container designated for this purpose.



Place cloth masks in a bag or container to take home and clean.



Clean your hands immediately after you remove your mask.

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