

Questions and Answers
Mask Use in Health-Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic
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Overview

1. When is the mask use in health-care facilities policy in effect?

The Ministry of Health’s [Mask Use in Health Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) policy took effect on November 4, 2020. All health authorities’ health-care facilities, health-care workers, primary care providers and medical specialists in community clinics are required to follow the provincial policy. Visitors and patients are also required to adhere to the policy.

2. What health-care settings are affected by this policy?

The health-care settings that are applicable to this policy are:

- Acute care hospitals
- Long-term care (public and private)
- Seniors’ assisted living facilities
- Family physician offices
- Medical specialists in community clinics
- Outpatient clinics (e.g., endoscopy, pain management, medical daycare, outpatient rehabilitation)
- Laboratories
- Public health and community health clinics
- Home support and community care
- Hospice and palliative care
- Ambulance and ambulance stations
- In-patient mental health services including forensic clinics and correctional health
- Women’s health clinics

3. Does this policy affect doctors' offices, particularly those offices with fee-for-service doctors who do not report to government?

Fee-for-service doctors provide health-care services to patients and are part of the health-care system funded by the ministry. As such, the ministry's expectation is that they will also put in place the policy at their clinics, similar to physicians and health-care workers at other community physician offices and outpatient clinics.

We have heard from some physicians that they would like further information on the use of masks in community physician practices and community clinics. The ministry is updating infection and prevention control guidance for community care settings and will share it with the Doctors of BC for distribution to physicians once available. The document will also provide guidance for community-based nursing professionals and midwives in clinic settings.

4. What is the difference between a health policy directive (which this is) and a public health order?

A health policy directive is issued by the Ministry of Health to communicate a new health system requirement or expectation.

A public health order comes either from the provincial health officer at the provincial level or from a medical health officer at the local/regional level issued under the *Public Health Act*. A public health order is specifically aimed at protecting public health during public health emergencies. The applicable parties must comply and the order can be enforced.

Health-Care Worker Mask Use

5. What type of mask is required in health-care settings?

Health-care workers are required to wear a medical mask in clinical areas and while providing any clinical services. The exception to this is when in a closed office or in a non-clinical office area that is not open to the public and where a two metre distance can be maintained. However, for any travel to or through common areas (i.e. elevators, hallways, bathrooms and break rooms or any other area where there is chance of less than a two metre separation), medical masks are required.

Medical masks must also be worn by patients, staff and visitors in clinical areas and while providing or receiving any clinical service, even if there is plexiglass in a work area and/or a distance of two metres can be maintained. Medical masks are not required for admitted patients while in their own room.

Medical masks must meet American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International and International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or equivalent performance requirements for bacterial filtration efficiency, particulate filtration efficiency, fluid resistance, pressure differential, flame spread, skin sensitivity and cytotoxic testing. Medical masks ordered through your health authority and the new centralized PPE distribution system for general practitioners, nurse practitioners and specialist physicians in community clinics will meet the standards required. If obtaining PPE directly from a vendor, please check the specifications of the mask to ensure they meet the policy requirements.

Medical masks should be available upon entry to clinical and patient-care areas or supplied prior to entry. They should be put on before entry with proper procedure and hand hygiene. Signage explaining how to do this is available [here](#).

6. Do health-care workers need to put on a medical mask upon entry to a health-care facility?

Yes, health-care workers working in a clinical unit or setting, or a patient-care area must wear a medical mask upon entry and while they are on-site, including in common areas including break rooms unless eating or drinking while maintaining a two metre distance from others.

Staff can wear a non-medical mask while commuting to and from work, but it is expected that they will wear a medical mask as they enter the facility premise, including in common areas, and clinical or patient-care areas.

7. How do health-care workers get medical masks at the door when arriving outside of “greeter” hours?

Masks should be made available at the entrance of a health-care facility or be provided prior to entry.

8. If health-care workers arrive wearing a medical mask, should they be given a new one?

If a health-care worker arrives with a medical mask, they are not required to change to a new mask unless their mask is visibly soiled, wet or damaged.

9. Do staff need to wear masks if they are behind plexiglass?

Under the mask policy, all staff working in a clinical unit/setting/patient care area must wear a medical mask, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking while maintaining a distance of at least two metres from others.

While plexiglass offers additional protection between staff and patients, a medical mask is still required while they are in the clinic. This will help protect patients and other staff when they cannot remain behind a plexiglass and need to move around the clinic.

10. What level of mask (Level 1,2,3) is required for health-care workers and staff for different procedures?

Surgical and procedure masks are categorized into one of three barrier levels based on the ASTM testing and associated fluid resistant to synthetic blood (mm Hg). ASTM levels (1,2,3) takes into account five elements:

- 1) fluid resistance (80, 12, 160 mm Hg)
- 2) particulate filtration efficiency (≥ 95 , ≥ 98 , ≥ 98)
- 3) breathability (<4 , <5 , <5 mm H₂O) differential pressure
- 4) bacterial filtration efficiency (≥ 95 , ≥ 98 , $\geq 98\%$)
- 5) flame spread (Class 1, Class 1, Class 1)

All rated procedure and surgical masks (ASTM Level 1, 2 and 3) provide sufficient protection for droplet precautions (including COVID-19 patients). Selection of the most appropriate mask must be

based on the risk of blood and body fluid exposure anticipated for the patient care needed. There is increased fluid resistance with Level 2 and Level 3 masks, and these should be used for tasks where higher amounts of fluid exposure and risk of splash are present.

Please see chart below for examples of the recommended level for each situation (source: <https://sn.astm.org/?q=features/standards-medical-face-masks-and-protective-clothing-.html>)

Level 1	Can resist splash or spray at venous pressure (e.g. for general procedures and respiratory etiquette).
Level 2	Can resist splash or spray at arterial pressure.
Level 3	Have the highest fluid resistance (e.g. used during orthopedic surgery or trauma).

As the risk level and PPE requirement varies based on different factors, we recommend you do a point-of-care risk assessment with patients as the best way to determine the appropriate level of medical mask and other PPE you may require.

11. When are N95 respirators required for health-care workers?

N95 respirators are required for patients on airborne precautions, and for aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMPs) on suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients. For AGMPs on patients without suspected or confirmed COVID-19, a medical mask is sufficient.

12. Are there exemptions to the medical mask policy (e.g., if an employee has a medical reason not to wear one)?

If a staff member has a medical condition that prohibits them from wearing a mask, they may request a medical accommodation via the employer’s disability management process (as applicable). Such an accommodation of a medical condition may result in that employee being temporarily reassigned to other duties where masking is not required.

13. What will occur if an employee declines to wear one without a medical reason?

Workers must abide by the protocols and policies in their employer’s COVID-19 safety plan, which includes the use of masks in certain circumstances. We encourage compliance through education and awareness, and we are hopeful that staff will understand the value of wearing a medical mask as part of the overall infection and prevention control strategy to protect patients, visitors and staff. Based on what we have heard from many health-care workers, staff and stakeholders, most support the use of masks and other PPE.

14. Are guidelines for extended use of PPE still in place?

Yes, guidelines for the extended use of PPE for health-care workers are still in place as outlined in the [COVID-19: Emergency Prioritization in a Pandemic Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Allocation Framework](#).

Mask Use in Non-Clinical Areas

15. What is a non-clinical area?

A non-clinical area within a health-care facility is an area where there is no direct patient care provided.

16. What type of mask is required in non-clinical areas of health-care facilities?

Medical masks are required in clinical units and patient care areas. If you are already wearing a medical mask as part of your work duties (i.e. you have to enter a clinical unit/patient care setting), then you should continue using a medical mask when travelling through common areas (i.e. elevators, hallways, bathrooms and break rooms or any other area where there is chance of less than a two metre separation).

If you are a non-clinical staff, working in a non-clinical area, you should use the mask provided/indicated as per your WorkSafe BC COVID-19 safety plan. A mask is required when travelling through common areas.

Visitors and patients are required to wear medical masks, when entering and moving around any health care facility, including clinical and non-clinical areas, as they are likely entering clinical units/patient care settings.

17. In multi-use facilities that contain clinical and non-clinical services, should we advise staff, patients and visitors to use medical grade masks throughout the building?

Medical masks are required on clinical units and patient care areas. If you are already wearing a medical mask as part of your work duties (i.e. you have to enter a clinical unit/patient care setting), then you should continue using a medical mask when travelling through common areas (i.e. elevators, hallways, bathrooms and break rooms or any other area where there is chance of less than a two metre separation).

If you are a non-clinical staff, working in a non-clinical area, you should use the mask provided/indicated as per your WorkSafe BC COVID-19 safety plan. A mask is required when travelling through common areas.

Visitors and patients are required to wear medical masks, when entering and moving around any health-care facility, including clinical and non-clinical areas, as they are likely entering clinical units/patient care settings.

18. Are medical masks required when entering or exiting a facility from the parking lot or parkade?

Staff can wear a non-medical mask while commuting to and from work, but it is expected that they will wear a medical mask when entering the health-care facility.

Non-clinical staff, working in a non-clinical area, should use the type of mask indicated as per their WorkSafe BC COVID-19 safety plan.

19. Are psychiatric spaces outside of clinical facilities included in this policy?

The provincial mask policy does apply to health-care workers and staff in private/independent psychiatrists' offices. However, exemptions may need to be made for patients, at the discretion of the most responsible health-care professional in these settings recognizing that they may be unable to wear a medical mask.

Patient Mask Use

20. Where should masks for patients be located?

It is recommended that medical masks and alcohol-based sanitizer (minimum 70% alcohol content) be available inside your facility or clinic for distribution to patients. We also recommend that tissues, and no-touch waste receptacles be made available at the entrance and throughout the facility.

21. What types of masks are acceptable for patients to use?

Under the provincial policy, patients must wear a medical mask when entering and moving around any health care facility, including clinical and non-clinical areas, with the exception of admitted patients when they are in their rooms (based on a health-care professional's point-of-care risk assessment). Admitted patients must wear a medical mask when they leave their room.

22. If a patient arrives wearing a medical mask or N95 respirator, do we still need to provide a new medical mask?

The provincial mask policy states that all health care facilities must provide medical masks for all patients and visitors. Because it is difficult to ensure that masks purchased outside of the facility meet the standards for medical masks, patients should be provided with a medical mask, no matter whether they are wearing one when they arrive.

23. Why did the government choose 'medical masks' over asking patients to wear non-medical (three-layer) masks?

Based on the current COVID-19 situation in B.C. and the advice of infection prevention and control experts, the ministry has updated the policy to protect the most vulnerable populations in health-care settings and health-care workers working within those settings.

Medical masks are now the minimum standard within health-care facilities. A medical mask offers a higher level of protection, both for the person wearing the medical mask and as source control, than non-medical masks.

This is especially important in long-term care, assisted living facilities and health-care facilities where there are patients/residents who are at a higher-risk of health complications from COVID-19 and health-care workers who work with these patients/residents.

While the ministry policy now requires medical-grade masks, it is important to emphasize that masks are one of the measures in the overall infection prevention and exposure control strategy to reduce the risk of COVID-19. Masks should be used along with other measures that are already in place at your facilities/offices/clinics, such as physical distancing, barriers, patient screening, people staying home when sick, proper hand washing and respiratory etiquettes. When all of these

measures are in place, they are highly effective at stopping transmission of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.

24. What are the expectations for patients when wearing masks?

Patients will be provided with medical masks when they enter the facility (patients who arrive wearing their own mask will be asked to change into the medical mask provided). They are expected to wear a medical mask while in the facility especially if they are moving to different rooms or areas of the building. However, admitted patients are not required to wear a mask while in their own room.

25. What if a patient refuses to wear a mask or change their cloth mask to medical mask?

The requirement to wear a medical mask in health-care settings is intended to provide an additional layer of safety for health-care workers, patients and visitors. We are hopeful that most patients will understand the value of wearing a medical mask and comply.

Encourage medical mask use by having signage as well as the provincial policy posted at the entrance and/or inside your clinic or facility. For patients presenting without a mask, provide a verbal reminder and assurance that you can provide a medical mask to wear at no cost. If they refuse, ask them if it is because they have a medical or physical reason that prohibits them from wearing a mask.

If you have a patient who cannot wear a mask due to a medical reason or a patient refuses to comply*, care must still be provided. However, if feasible, consider how the patient can be accommodated during their visit in way that minimizes risk to health-care workers, staff and other patients. For example, in a non-acute care setting you may be able to reschedule their appointment to a quieter time when there are fewer patients/clients and staff at your clinic to reduce the risk for the patient, other patients and your staff. In some cases, a virtual consultation may be appropriate based on the patient's condition and the risk level.

For health-care staff working in health authorities' facilities and requiring support with patients or visitors who refuse to comply with the policy, staff should speak to their management team for support.

*Please note, under the provincial orders effective November 24, 2020, everyone is required to wear face covering (non-medical masks) in indoor public spaces, including health professionals' offices. **However, there are exemptions to the orders, including:**

- A person who is less than 12 years of age;
- A person who is unable to wear a face covering because of
 - a psychological, behavioural or health condition, or
 - a physical, cognitive or mental impairment;
- A person who is unable to put on or remove a face covering without the assistance of another person

For more information on the orders on face covering including exemptions, visit:

https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/mo/mo/m0425_2020

More details on province-wide restrictions are available at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/restrictions#masks>

26. What is your advice for staff who work with patients where asking the patient to don a mask may escalate behaviour?

The safety of health-care workers and staff is extremely important. We understand there are some patients and situations where enforcement of the medical mask policy would be more harmful to the patient and staff. The health-care professional should assess each individual case and has the discretion to determine the most appropriate approach based on the circumstances. Exceptions to the provincial policy may need to be applied for people with certain medical conditions and/or to accommodate site-specific circumstances.

For those working in a health authority facility and requiring support with patients or visitors who refuse to comply with the policy, please speak to your management team for support.

Please note, under the provincial orders effective November 24, 2020, everyone is required to wear face covering (non-medical masks) in indoor public spaces including a health professional's office and indoor common spaces in a hospital. **However, the following populations are exempted from the orders:**

- A person who is less than 12 years of age;
- A person who is unable to wear a face covering because of
 - a psychological, behavioural or health condition, or
 - a physical, cognitive or mental impairment;
- A person who is unable to put on or remove a face covering without the assistance of another person

Please see the orders for more details:

https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/mo/mo/m0425_2020

Additional information on mask requirements in indoor public settings and other province-wide restrictions are available at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/restrictions#masks>

27. Are there any consequences for people not wearing a mask when walking around the hospital?

Under the provincial orders effective November 24, 2020, everyone over the age of 12 is required to wear a face covering or mask in indoor public spaces. People who cannot wear a mask or who cannot put on or remove a mask on their own are exempt.

We hope to achieve compliance through education and awareness but failure to comply or abusive and belligerent behaviour towards others may result in persons being asked to leave the premises and could ultimately lead to a ticket being issued by an enforcement officer.

28. What if a visitor cannot or will not wear a mask?

As safety is key, a visitor may be denied entry into a health-care facility of any kind if they cannot or will not wear a mask. Exceptions to this would be for medical or compassionate reasons. In these cases, a point-of-care risk assessment would be performed and a plan developed for that visitor.

29. Are patients in ambulances and other forms of patient transport required to wear a medical mask?

Yes. All patients must wear a medical mask during medical transport including in ambulances, unless exempted or when requested to remove their mask by a health-care provider.

30. Are masks required for patients in large common areas such as dialysis, post-anesthesia care units, etc.?

Yes, all patients must wear a medical mask when in clinical areas of a health-care facility, unless requested to remove their mask by a health-care professional.

31. Are asymptomatic hemodialysis patients required to wear their mask throughout the entire dialysis run while sitting/lying at their station or can they not have a mask on while at their station similar to admitted patients in their rooms?

All patients and visitors must wear a medical mask while in a clinical area.

32. Can people attending flu clinics held in a health authority unit or health centre wear non-medical mask or do they need to wear a medical mask for immunization?

The policy applies to all health-care facilities and health authority-run programs and services. As such, people attending an influenza clinic at a health unit, health centre or a temporary clinic in the community would be required to wear medical masks.

Policy Exemptions

33. Are there exemptions to the policy and can you provide some examples?

It is important to note that most people can tolerate wearing face masks. Exceptions to the medical mask policy may be applied for people with certain medical conditions in accordance with a [human rights approach to mask-wearing during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Examples of medical conditions include:

- cognitive impairment
- intellectual and developmental challenges
- mental health conditions
- other sensory sensitivities (such as autism spectrum disorder)
- a serious allergic reaction
- a physical inability to put on or remove a mask

34. Are all children expected to wear medical masks, or is it excluded for specific age ranges?

The medical mask policy is intended for adults and youth who are able to wear and remove medical masks properly on their own.

Children under two years of age should not wear masks because there are risks of breathing problems, choking or strangulation. For young children over the age of two, masks are generally not recommended as they can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes. However, if an older child/youth wants to wear a mask: show them [how to do so safely](#). Please see BCCDC's [website](#) for more information. Using a mask alone is not enough to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Children who wear a mask still need to:

- avoid touching their face
- wash their hands often
- stay home when sick

Please note, under the provincial orders effective November 24, 2020, everyone is required to wear face covering (non-medical masks) in indoor public spaces including health professionals' offices. However, children under 12 years of age are exempted from the orders on face covering in indoor public spaces.

For more information on the provincial orders on face covering including exemptions, visit:

https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/mo/mo/m0425_2020

More details on province-wide restrictions are available at:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/restrictions#masks>

Ordering Masks

35. How can general practitioners, nurse practitioners or specialist physicians in community clinics order medical masks?

The Health PPE Portal, a new centralized online ordering system for general practitioners, nurse practitioners and specialist physicians in community clinics, launched on November 30 in a phased approach and should be available to these providers by mid-December. If you are a general practitioner, nurse practitioner or specialist physician working in a community clinic and you did not receive a letter with a customer number by December 15, 2020, please contact health.ppe@gov.bc.ca. If you need more medical masks and you don't have access to this system yet, contact your health authority directly or your division of family practice. The supply will be provided to you at no cost.

36. When placing an order for medical masks, what should we be asking for?

The medical masks need to meet ASTM International and International Organization for Standardization ISO (or equivalent) requirements. The province has taken steps to assess, inspect, and test these products to ensure that they meet regulatory requirements and can be safely used in the health-care system.

For general practitioners, nurse practitioners and specialist physicians in community clinics using the Health PPE Portal, you will be able to order the medical masks and other critical supplies you need through this system.

37. What if medical masks I have in stock are not the recommended brands? Do they need to be thrown out?

There are various brands that meet the ASTM International and ISO (or equivalent) performance requirements; please check your supplies against the latest provincial [PPE bulletins](#) on the BCCDC website on the use of alternative/equivalent PPE, N95 respirators as well as [Health Canada's authorized medical devices for COVID-19](#) link for a complete list. Please note that masks provided by health authorities and the PHSA supply chain are checked for appropriateness and safety.

The provincial and federal lists are updated frequently so if you have masks from other brands that are not currently listed in the provincial PPE bulletin or on the federal authorized medical devices list, we suggest you keep them at your clinic/office, if possible. They may be used in non-health-care settings, outside of your offices or clinics. For instance, when you need to take transit, need to go to the grocery stores or other public places. But please clearly label those masks that do not meet the requirement and store them separately from the medical masks that you need to use at your offices, to avoid possible mix-up of different grades of masks.

38. I'm a midwife, can I order medical masks to comply with this policy?

Yes, midwives can obtain medical masks at no charge through the Home Birth Supplies Program to comply with the recently updated mask use policy for all clinical work and home births. This will remain in effect until the end of the pandemic response.

Infection Prevention and Control

39. What are donning and doffing procedures for medical masks?

Please see the [How to Wear a Surgical/Medical Mask](#) poster on BCCDC's website on how to wear a face mask. We recommend you have this poster available at the entrance where the medical masks are available to patients/visitors and inside your facility for staff.

For you and your staff who are wearing PPE in addition to masks, for example, eye goggles, face shields and gowns: please visit BCCDC's webpage on [PPE for health-care professionals](#) for more information on how to don and doff PPE.

40. Does everyone with a mask also need to be wearing eye protection and gloves?

Eye protection (e.g. goggles, face shields), gloves, gowns and other PPE are required in accordance with a point-of-care risk assessment when providing direct patient care and when performing potentially hazardous tasks within health-care facilities (e.g., using chemicals or compounding drugs).

Please conduct a point-of-risk care assessment to determine if other PPE such as eye protection, gloves or gowns are required in addition to a medical mask. Visit the BC Centre for Disease Control's website for PPE resources for health-care professionals: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment#For--health--professionals>

41. Is there anything else I should know about masking or safety protocols in my workplace?

Yes. Check your COVID 19 safety plan.

WorkSafe BC requires all workplaces in B.C. to have developed safety plans for their area. They outline any specific protocols required. If you do not have one and need assistance, contact your Occupational Health and Safety department or Joint Occupational Health and Safety committee if you are with a health authority. Please visit the [WorkSafe BC website](#) for more information on COVID-19 safety plans.

Mask Use in Long-Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living Facilities

42. Are residents required to wear masks in their long-term care facility in all areas? For example, in their rooms?

Under the policy, only health-care workers and staff as well as visitors are required to wear a medical mask on-site. They should conduct a point-of-care risk assessment to determine if other PPE is required.

In general, residents who are not suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 are not required to wear a medical mask when they move around in the facility. In exceptional circumstances, such as an outbreak, the health-care professional providing care to long-term care and assisted living residents has the discretion to decide if PPE or other preventative measures are required for the health and safety of other residents and staff, under the guidance of the Medical Health Officer or delegate.

Reinforce the importance of other preventive measures, such as physical distancing with staff, residents and visitors on an ongoing basis. For example, where possible, facilitate physical distance between residents in communal areas through reducing foot traffic, furniture placement and seating arrangements.

If you have residents who are suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, please restrict the resident to their room or bed space, including during meals and any other clinical or social activities, unless absolutely necessary, to minimize the risk of transmission to other residents and staff.

In the rare circumstances where a resident with COVID-19 symptoms must leave their room, they should wear a medical mask (if tolerated) or use tissues to cover their mouth and nose. Please see the [Infection Prevention and Control Requirements for COVID-19 in Long Term Care and Seniors' Assisted Living](#) guidance on BCCDC's website for more information.

43. Does the policy apply to private long-term care and seniors' assisted living facilities? Has this been communicated to those operators?

Yes, this policy applies to private long-term care and seniors' assisted living facilities as well. The ministry has communicated the expectation to all regional health authorities and facility operators.

44. What if a symptomatic long-term care and assisted living resident or symptomatic patient in behavioural units are not able to wear masks? Are there other guidelines?

There are some residents who are not able to wear a medical mask for medical or other reasons where enforcement would be more harmful to the resident, other residents and staff. The health-care professional should assess each individual case and exercise their discretion to determine the most appropriate approach based on the circumstances.

For residents who cannot comply with the restrictions, please see [COVID-19 Ethics Analysis: Intervening When Patients or Residents Pose a Risk of COVID-19 Transmission to Others](#) for guidance.

Mask Use in Other Settings Where Health Services are Provided

45. Are allied health professionals such as chiropractors, pharmacists, traditional Chinese medicine practitioners and osteopaths included in the scope of the mask policy?

The medical mask policy does not apply to other community-based settings (private/independent pharmacies, clinics or offices) for allied health professionals such as pharmacists, physiotherapists, optometrists, dentists, chiropractors, massage therapists and acupuncturists.

The regulatory college/association for each profession has developed guidance and plans for safe operations to their members, which include the use of non-medical masks and other infection and prevention control measures. We emphasize that patient screening is key to keep your operations safe for you, your staff and patients.

The mandatory [COVID-19 Safety Plans](#) required by WorkSafe BC outline the policies, guidelines and procedures that best prevent transmission and enhance safety in these settings. Please visit WorkSafe BC's [website](#) for more information on the use of masks to control exposure to COVID-19.

46. Do home support clients need to wear medical masks in their homes?

Clients living in their own homes do NOT need to wear medical masks during home support visits. If they have symptoms, health-care providers have the discretion to request clients to wear a mask.

Health-care providers visiting clients are required to wear medical masks in clients' homes under the policy. Please conduct a point-of-care risk assessment to determine if other PPE is required. The medical mask and other PPE (if required) will help protect health-care providers during their visits.

47. Do other residents in a home support client's household need to wear medical masks?

Other residents should maintain physical distance (for example, stay in another part of the home) during home support visits, if possible. If they are involved in client's care and need to be present, they are required to wear masks as physical distance cannot be maintained. They should also practise hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to reduce the risk of transmission.

48. Does the policy apply to residential care facilities (community-based residential services)?

The medical mask policy only applies to long-term care, seniors' assisted living facilities and health-care facilities where health-care services are being provided. It does not apply to residential facilities operated by community social service providers.

There are guidance including infection and prevention control measures for social service providers to help them reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission for their clients and staff. Please visit BCCDC's [website](#) for more information.

49. Are dentists and dental assistants included in the mask policy?

The medical mask policy does not apply to community dental offices. B.C.'s four oral health colleges have developed joint guidance for safe operations for: certified dental assistants, dental hygienists, dental technicians, dental therapists, denturists and dentists.

The guidance includes the use of non-medical masks and other infection and prevention control measures to protect you, your staff and patients. We emphasize that patient screening in advance of their appointment is a key tool for keeping your operations safe.

Please see the guidance available on the [College of Dental Surgeons of BC website](#) for more information.

All health-care workers, including dentists, are expected to follow the mask policy when working in a hospital or health authority-run facility.

50. Does this policy apply to correctional officers?

The medical mask policy does not apply to correctional officers.

The mandatory [COVID-19 Safety Plans](#) required by WorkSafeBC outline the policies, guidelines and procedures that best prevent transmission and enhance safety in these settings. Please visit WorkSafeBC's [website](#) for more information on the use of masks to control exposure to COVID-19.