

Changes to masking and healthcare worker guidance at Nova Scotia Health

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Masking Guidance: Throughout the COVID -19 Pandemic, Nova Scotia Health has learned valuable lessons about respiratory protection for patients, families and health care providers. The Emerging and Re-emerging Infections Network (ERIN) continues to monitor viral respiratory activity, including COVID-19, Influenza A and B and RSV within hospitalized patients and the broader community. Thanks to the efforts of our staff, Nova Scotia Health can confidently adjust our masking requirements.

Effective May 22, masking will not be required upon entry to Nova Scotia Health facilities. Anyone who is symptomatic must don a mask to enter a facility. Updated signage will be posted at entrances.

Masking requirements during clinical interactions will be based on a [Point of Care Risk Assessment](#) or if deemed required by specific programs/services. Those supporting patients at the highest risk of severe outcomes of infection may choose to require masking. Signage and masks should be placed in a visible location for patients and visitors upon entry to the unit.

The Nova Scotia Health [Respiratory Virus Masking Guidance](#) has been updated for spring and summer 2024 to reflect these changes at the [Emerging and Re-emerging Infections Network Hub](#).

The epidemiology of respiratory viruses in the general population and in Nova Scotia Health facilities will continue to be monitored as we move into the fall months. Further adjustments to masking will be made in response to local epidemiology, which may include a return to universal masking during future seasons of increased viral respiratory activity.

Health care worker guidance: Effective May 22, there will be changes in the guidance for health care workers who:

- have tested positive for COVID. These health care workers must remain off work for **5** days following symptom onset or date of test. Upon return to work they must mask up to and including day 10.
- have tested negative, or if no test result is available, they must remain off work until symptoms have improved or resolved and are fever free for 24 hours. Upon return to work, they must mask up to 10 days from the onset of symptoms.

Health care workers seeking additional advice and guidance can access communicable disease guidance on the [Occupational Health Safety & Wellness](#) intranet. Please note, the COVID-19 Status Reason for Work Absence webform will no longer be required.

If you have questions, regarding these changes, you can reach out to the Emerging & Re-emerging Infections Network at ERINnetwork@nshealth.ca

May 2, 2024