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Effective immediately: Continuous use of face masks and eye protection

The [Infection Prevention and Control Guidance: Continuous Use of Medical Grade Face Masks and Eye Protection for Full Shifts in Healthcare Settings During COVID-19 Pandemic – All Phases](#)

was revised in response to increased COVID-19 activity in the province:

- All health care workers (HCWs) working in high-risk clinical settings (i.e. COVID-19 units, ERs, All ICUs, ORs, and COVID-19 Assessment Centres) will wear facial protection (medical grade face mask and eye protection (goggles/face shield)) continuously, at all times **when providing care for**

all patients when a physical barrier (i.e., plexiglass) is not in place to prevent transmission of droplets.

- All HCWs will wear facial protection (medical grade face mask and eye protection (goggles/face shield)) when providing care to suspect/confirmed COVID-19 patients.
- All HCWs will wear a medical grade face mask continuously, at all times in all areas of their workplace when a physical barrier (i.e., plexiglass) is not in place.
- The use of eye protection (safety glasses) is optional for HCWs working in all non-high-risk clinical settings or when indicated by PCRA.
- Facial Protection (medical grade face mask and eye protection (goggles/face shield)) is immediately changed and safely disposed of whenever it is damaged, soiled/wet, and after providing care for any patient on Isolation Precautions.
- Reusable eye protection is cleaned and disinfected after providing care for any patient on Isolation Precautions.

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- Eye protection is to be changed or cleaned and disinfected every time a mask is changed and when contaminated, soiled or wet.



Inpatient passes / leave of absences

The [*Infection Prevention & Control Guidance: Inpatient Passes/Leave of Absences During COVID-19 Orange Phase*](#) was developed to meet organizational needs and ensure a safe and consistent approach to Horizon's inpatient passes/leave of absences, while limiting potential exposure risks for all patients, staff and physicians during the COVID-19 Orange Phase.

The document includes the following changes:

- Inpatient movement will remain restricted during the orange phase. This includes smoking passes and patient movement off the inpatient unit. Exceptions to this may include:
 - diagnostic testing or treatment within or outside the hospital setting
 - overnight or day passes/leave of absences that are clinically required for treatment, to assess the patient's readiness for a safe and successful discharge, or for compassionate reasons.
- Patient passes/leave of absences are an important part of the patient's treatment, recovery, and discharge plan



- Public Health protocols such as physical distancing, use of a face mask and hand hygiene must be strictly adhered by the patient and all members of the household when outside the home.
- Patient passes/leave of absences may be authorized by the Executive Director or their designate. Addictions and Mental Health inpatient requests will be approved by the Director of Addictions and Mental Health or their designate.



Management of patients with a valid medical exemption from wearing a face mask

An IPC guidance document was developed to ensure alignment with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission, recognizing that the appropriate and consistent use of face masks may be challenging for children under the age of two and for people of any age with certain disabilities or medical conditions.

The [*Infection Prevention & Control Guidance: Management of Patients with a Valid Medical Exemption from Wearing a Face Mask*](#) complies with the Human Rights Commission statement "Everyone Must Respect Fundamental Accessibility Rights of Persons with Disabilities" and ensures a consistent approach is taken in all Horizon facilities for the management of patients with a valid medical exemption from wearing a face mask.

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Revised: General and compassionate visitation guidance

The [Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Visitation \(General and Compassionate\) During COVID-19 Orange Phase Table](#) was revised to reflect the current COVID-19 activity within the province.

The revised document:

- supports general visitation by asymptomatic visitors from within Atlantic Provinces (including NB) who are **fully vaccinated**
- incorporates the provincial travel requirements
- includes guidance for compassionate visitation for unvaccinated visitors, including those from NB
- outlines COVID-19 testing requirements for fully vaccinated domestic and international travellers or those who have traveled from a higher risk area within the Atlantic provinces.
 - A negative COVID-19 test after entering the province or coming from a higher risk area prior to the arrival to the facility (test has been completed no more than 48 hrs prior to visit).
 - A repeat COVID-19 test will be required on Day 5, if the visits continue to occur.

Please visit the [IPC Resources COVID-19 Skyline Page](#) for COVID-19 information on any of the above communications.



Enhanced precautions in the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic

The following information is sent on behalf of Dr. John Dornan Horizon's Interim President and CEO.

Through the COVID-19 pandemic, Horizon has maintained enhanced safety measures in our facilities to protect our health care system, our patients and clients, and you, our staff, physicians and volunteers.

With the recent increase in confirmed COVID-19 cases and hospital admissions, particularly ICU admissions, in New Brunswick, we are closely monitoring our health care system, notably our capacity to care for urgent and emergency cases, while maintaining essential services.

Today, I share with you several updates on how we will continue to prepare for the fourth wave of COVID-19.

Updated internal COVID-19 precautions and protocols

We have updated our COVID-19 precautions and protocols based on direction from our Infectious Disease (ID) and Infection Prevention & Control (IPC) team.

Some guidelines have been slightly adapted to fit our current situation. For more information, please review the updated ID-IPC guidance documents in today's bulletin.

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We have also updated staff and physician and patient and visitor screening questions.

Enhanced visitor restrictions

Effective today, **Wednesday, Sept. 22** only those who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 will be permitted to visit a Horizon hospital or health care facility. **This does not apply to patients.** Further guidelines apply to visitors from outside the Atlantic provinces and the Avignon and Témiscouata counties and Listuguj First Nation in Quebec.

Please review and share the [General Visitor Guidelines for Hospitals and Health Care Facilities](#) chart. Complete details on enhanced visitor restrictions will be available later today on HorizonNB.ca.

Updated travel guidelines for health care workers

Updated travel guidelines for health care workers have been developed by Employee Health. Please review and share the [Travel Guidelines for Health Care Workers](#) chart.

Health care system operations

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic our guidelines have successfully limited the risk of COVID-19 in our facilities. The safety of staff and physicians, patients and clients and visitors remains our number one priority.

Staffing remains a concern and occupancy rates are high, however, at this time we are able to maintain all current services, including surgical and outpatient services.

Along with our dashboard, we have prepared a [status report](#) that will be shared with media and the public.



A sincere **thank you** to all of you for continuing to go above and beyond in our COVID-19 response. I know it isn't easy and that you may be tired; I appreciate your dedication to one another and to your patients and clients throughout these ups and downs.

Updated guidance on Designated Support People (DSPs)

During the Orange phase, DSP [guidelines](#) remain the same as the Yellow phase with the following exceptions:

- Women in Labour: 1 DSP designated and present with the patient
- Pediatrics: Up to 2 DSPs designated with 1 DSP present with the patient

Click [here](#) for more information on the DSP program

GNB guidance on use of nasopharyngeal swabs

Nasopharyngeal swabs remain the gold standard for COVID-19 sample collection, whether for standard PCR or rapid (GeneXpert) testing. Previously the nares/throat collection method was to be used in only children under 12 years.

Beginning Sept. 17, 2021, the assessment centres can provide nares/throat swab or Nasopharyngeal swab as a first swab offered interchangeably for all ages. The offer of nares/throat as a first swab will continue to provide a high reliability of

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result and broaden the pool of professionals with the necessary skills to collect the sample. The nares/throat specimen has a 95% sensitivity which is comparable to a Nasopharyngeal specimen.

The use of nares/throat swabs, Nasopharyngeal swabs will be available at each provincial COVID-19 assessment centre for all age groups.

Swish and gargle is an alternative to nasopharyngeal or nares/throat specimens for all age groups, *but not preferred* given the additional time and preparation required. If also requesting influenza or RSV testing, this specimen type is not appropriate and NP or nares/throat specimen must be collected.

Please continue to follow the current process to stock your assessment center for the nares/throat collection swab by contacting your local laboratory for the shipment to your assessment centre.



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