

# Bulletin #135: COVID-19 Information

## April 15, 2021



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## **COVID-19 Bulletin**

### **Why We Wear Masks When Vaccinated**

#### **COVID-19 Patient Care IPC Measures: Top 4 reasons we still need to wear masks even if vaccinated**

So, are you sick of wearing masks yet? Masks have played a critical role both in preventing transmission (source control) and getting infected with COVID-19. Nonetheless, all the personal measures we take every day to protect ourselves and others has a cost.

For now, this cost will be well worth it. Here are the Top 4 reasons New Brunswickers must still wear a mask.

1. **It will take months before the majority of the population will get vaccinated.** Currently, less than 15

per cent of New Brunswickers over the age of 16 have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. It will be several months from now before the majority of adults will have received two vaccine doses, and this will not occur for the population under 16 until sometime in 2022. We also do not yet know what proportion of the total population requires vaccination in order to obtain herd immunity. Until we reach herd immunity, we still need to wear masks.

2. **Vaccines are not 100 per cent effective.** All of the vaccines approved in Canada for COVID-19 have very high levels of protection. These vaccines reduce the risk of symptomatic infection by approximately 70 to 95 per cent and early evidence indicates they reduce asymptomatic infection by a similar margin. This means that some vaccinated New Brunswickers will get infected. Because vaccines are not 100 per cent effective, we still need to wear masks.

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#### 3. **We do not know the duration of vaccine protection.**

So far, we know that vaccine protection is good for at least four months. These vaccines are brand new, so it will be a year from now before we know if they are protective for one year, and two years from now to know if they are protective for two years. In the meantime, we still need to wear masks.

#### 4. **People can become reinfected.**

There is now good evidence to show that people previously infected with earlier strains of COVID-19 can be reinfected with new variants. It is therefore possible that we could see new variants causing infection in vaccinated persons. Until we know the answer to this question, we still need to wear masks.

Yes, we are all tired of wearing masks, but for now, we need to continue to wear a mask, maintain two metres (six feet) of physical distancing, limit our social networks, avoid large crowds, practice cough etiquette and use frequent hand hygiene.

These measures are so effective, New Brunswick has not had a single influenza transmission this winter.

There is a good chance we will be able to diminish these measures over time, but for now we should continue these safety practices.



On a positive note, this pandemic has reinforced how important it is to practice good hand hygiene at all times and stay home if you have respiratory symptoms. These two habits should never disappear.

#### **SOP for AGMP and Oxygen Delivery**

The following IPC Guidance documents have been developed or updated, and are located on the IPC Resources COVID-19 page on [Skyline](#).

#### **SOP - IPC Guidance for Performing an Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure (AGMP) During Patient Resuscitation and Other Scenarios**

The SOP-IPC Guidance for Performing an AGMP During Patient Resuscitation and Other Scenarios will assist Healthcare Workers (HCWs) working in Emergency Departments and other clinical settings in applying the AGMP risk reduction strategies outlined in the [IPC Guidance: Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures During COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

To complement this SOP a "[Flow Diagram for Patients Receiving an AGMP](#)" was developed. This diagram serves as a quick guide and simplifies the process for HCWs to apply the AGMP risk reduction strategies.

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It was noted that the AGMP risk reduction strategy is a significant change to current practice and that in-person education on the SOP and flow diagram would be beneficial. Identified members of the ID / Med Micro Advisory Group and local Area IPC will provide in-person education to ER Departments and ICU / CCU staff.

Managers / Physicians may contact their local IPC Service to request in-person education as needed:

- Fredericton/URV Area: 506-474-4608
- Moncton Area: 506-857-5132
- Miramichi Area: 506-623-3474
- Saint John Area: 506-648-7087

### **Horizon oxygen delivery guidelines during COVID-19 pandemic**

[Oxygen Delivery Guidelines](#) were developed to support the clinical management of COVID -19 patients.

To supplement the Oxygen Delivery Guidelines, a poster addressing frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to oxygen delivery and AGMP has been included with the document. The poster can be used as an educational tool for frontline HCWs to clarify AGMP status.



The [poster](#) is available to HCWs on the IPC Resources Skyline Page and will be available for printing from the Saint John Area Print shop. The print shop order number is HHN-1160.

### **Self-screening reminder**

We want to remind all employees and physicians of the importance of remaining familiar with the screening questions.

The questions and signage for employees and physicians can be accessed [here](#). For your awareness, the patient and visitor screening questions can be found [here](#).

Remember:

- Employees and physicians are required to self screen prior to leaving home for their shift.
- Once at the facility, employees and physicians must swipe their ID badge.
- Employees and physicians who leave the facility for any reason (break, meal period, to smoke, or interfacility travel) will be required to self screen upon their return.

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Employee Health is available daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. to answer any questions or concerns. Please call 1-833-978-2580 and leave a voicemail and your call will be returned within two hours.

**Please note:** If you have travelled to the Edmundston area for non-work-related purposes, please self-monitor closely for symptoms.

### HR Reminders

#### REMINDERS:

- **Wearing medical grade masks in Horizon facilities and on Horizon property is mandatory.**
- **Hand washing as you enter Horizon facilities is mandatory.**
- **Physical distancing in Horizon facilities is mandatory.**
- **Completion of the self-screening questionnaire before entering a Horizon facility is mandatory.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues across New Brunswick and as employees and physicians receive their vaccination, it was felt that another reminder regarding Horizon's expectations regarding hand hygiene, mask wearing, physical



distancing, and completion of the self-screening questionnaire was warranted. Communication to Horizon employees and physicians has been clear: masks are to be worn, hands are to be cleaned upon entry, people are to maintain physical distancing, and self-screening questionnaires are to be completed. **These requirements remain in place even if you have received one or two doses of the vaccine.**

All Horizon employees and physicians are required to self-screen BEFORE entering Horizon property. Upon entry to a Horizon facility in these zones, employees are required to swipe their access cards and clean their hands. Masks must be medical grade and must be worn before leaving your vehicle.

It is important that we follow the posted limits to the number of people who can use break rooms and tables in cafeterias at the same time to ensure that physical distancing is maintained. We have received a number of reports that employees are not following physical distancing or the signage in cafeterias. This is particularly problematic as masks are removed when people eat.

Compliance is being monitored. Employees and physicians who do not abide by these requirements will be subject to discipline.

### Atlantic Bubble

Many of you are likely now aware that the governments of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and

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Newfoundland and Labrador have decided to delay the opening of an Atlantic Bubble until at least May 3, 2021.

Employees who leave New Brunswick are therefore still required to self-isolate upon their return. All requests for leave (vacation, statutory time, etc.) that involve extra-provincial travel must include the mandatory period of self-isolation. Horizon's ability to grant these requests remains dependent on operational requirements.

#### [Interval for the administration of the second dose to health care workers](#)

Vaccination with an approved COVID-19 vaccine is an important public health measure to protect against infection from SARS-COV2 and its variants.

All citizens are susceptible to COVID-19. However, some are more at risk than others for either poor outcomes or for enabling onward transmission of the virus. Health care workers (HCW) are deemed a priority group by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) to ensure the risk of onward transmission through exposure to COVID is diminished.

To date in NB, HCW have been offered one dose of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine. NACI and the CCMOHs have released evidence-based statements in support of the extended interval approach during limited vaccine supply, PTs should provide one dose of vaccine to all. This will ensure that broad-based



community protection which will minimize the disproportionate burden placed on those taking the additional risk in delivering critical healthcare services. By reducing hospitalizations, the likelihood at which HCW will come into contact with, or have to manage, a patient with COVID-19 is greatly reduced.

There are indications that the majority of HCW infections are acquired within the community and not within the health care setting. Therefore, community protection against COVID-19 is essential. Appropriate PPE protects HCW and patients and there is emerging information that one dose of the vaccine protects against asymptomatic infection of COVID-19.

While there is some indication that a second dose would provide additional protection to HCW, none of the provinces or territories have committed to implement a priority 2-dose regime for HCW since the initial roll out in the first quarter of 2021.

It is anticipated that every New Brunswicker who wishes to be vaccinated will be offered a vaccine by the end of June. This vaccination plan will impact second-dose clinics; however, it is confirmed that all individuals will have a second dose within the maximum 4-month timeframe or sooner when vaccine supply allows.

**[GNB update](#)**

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When available, today's news release can be access [here](#).

