

INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL COVID-19 COMMITTEE

Bulletin #166a – COVID-19 – ID-IPC – Updated Guidance Documents – Sep 22 2021

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.
- 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.

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.