

# Face Mask and Eye Protection Guidance & FAQ



COVID - 19

Be Safe – Be Smart – Be Kind

## Staff Guidance – effective Wednesday 22 July 2020

Due to an increased risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) across metropolitan Melbourne, Western Health has revised our advice in line with DHHS recommendations on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

We now advise **ALL** Western Health staff at **ALL** Western Health sites\* are now required to wear a surgical mask **in all areas on all sites** – this applies to both the clinical and non-clinical setting.

We also advise that **ALL** staff who work in clinical areas and public-facing areas of the health service (also applies to those in clinical areas while conducting work at a desk) are now required to wear eye protection in addition to the surgical mask (either a full face shield or safety goggles). Staff in shared office areas where physical distancing is **not possible** must also wear eye protection (either a full face shield or safety goggles) as well as their surgical mask.

This advice is in accordance with **Tier 1 PPE** precautions contained within the [Western Health COVID-19 PPE Guidelines](#). **Tier 1 PPE** at Western Health consists of a surgical mask plus full face shield OR safety goggles.

Staff in shared office areas where physical distancing **is possible** are required to wear a surgical mask only. Please note these staff are still required to apply eye protection (either a full face shield or safety goggles) if moving into public facing or clinical areas.

\*All sites includes Sunshine Hospital (including the Joan Kirner Women's and Children's), Footscray Hospital, The Williamstown Hospital, Hazeldean Transitional Care and Sunbury Day Hospital

This directive is for two key reasons:

1. **Protects you from others** – If you are wearing a surgical mask and full face shield or safety goggles, this will help **protect you** from contracting COVID-19 from another person, whether it is a staff member or a patient or visitor.
2. **Protects others from you** – This is about **reducing the risk from someone who does not have symptoms but may be infected and contagious**. If the asymptomatic but infectious person is wearing a mask, this reduces the risk significantly among all of us who are staff colleagues and also for our patients and visitors. Staff can also be an infectious risk from their personal lives in their communities and this is a reason we have moved to Tier 1 PPE to protect each other from our colleagues and ourselves.

## Background

COVID-19 is transmitted via infectious droplets produced by infected people when they cough, sneeze or speak, coming into contact with our mucous membranes (eyes, nose and mouth). These droplets can also land on surfaces. Touching one of these surfaces, then touching our mucous membranes, can also lead to infection.

Not everyone infected with coronavirus shows symptoms. While some people become very unwell, others may not be affected at all. It is possible that patients, visitors and colleagues can be infected with coronavirus without knowing it. Surgical masks and face shields can help trap many of these infectious droplets and prevent them from spreading to others. This is called “source control”.

Full face shields have been distributed to all Western Health staff as part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The eye protection offered by full face shields or safety goggles is one component of standard precautions.

Full face shields protect our mucous membranes (eyes, nose and mouth) from infectious droplets. They also act as a physical barrier, preventing us from touching our mucous membranes with contaminated hands as well as protecting the front of the surgical mask.

Please refer to the [Full Face Shield QRG](#) for more information.

Staff who do not tolerate wearing a full face shield, can wear safety goggles instead.

**Staff are reminded that hand hygiene is an important part of protecting themselves from COVID-19. Perform hand hygiene before and after touching your full face shield.**

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### What is Tier 1 PPE at Western Health?

Tier 1 PPE at Western Health consists of a surgical mask plus full face shield OR surgical mask plus safety goggles. As per standard precautions you may also need a plastic apron in clinical areas.

At this current time Tier 1 PPE is the new ‘standard precaution’ at Western Health to **protect each other** and our patients.

Please refer to [Western Health COVID-19 PPE Guidelines](#) to be reminded of the PPE Tiers.

### I work in a shared office, what PPE do I need?

Staff in shared office areas where physical distancing **is not possible** can wear safety goggles or full face shield (as their eye protection) as well as their surgical mask. Staff in shared office areas where physical distancing **is possible** are required to wear a surgical mask only. Please note these staff must apply eye protection (either a full face shield or safety goggles) if moving into public facing or clinical areas.

If staff require safety goggles or other PPE, please speak to your line manager.

### I don't have any symptoms, why do I need to do this?

In the current situation staff are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19 within their local community than they potentially are at work.

We are asking staff to wear surgical masks and eye protection to protect themselves and others.

### How do I put on my surgical mask safely?

First conduct hand hygiene and then put on the mask, handling it only by the side ties or elastic ties. Then put on your shield handling it only by the elastic strap. **Refer to posters at the end of this guidance for more information.**

### How do I remove my surgical mask safely?

The front of your surgical mask and face shield is potentially contaminated. **DO NOT TOUCH!** To remove your face shield, do so only by touching the elastic at the back.

To remove your surgical mask, grasp the side ties or elastic ties, then remove (the design of the masks can vary slightly). Discard in a waste bin and perform hand hygiene. **Refer to posters at the end of this guidance for more information.**

### Which bin do I use to dispose of my surgical mask?

If you do not work in clinical areas, you can dispose of your surgical mask in a standard landfill rubbish bin.

If you do work in clinical areas, you should dispose of your surgical mask in a yellow bin.

### How long should I wear the surgical mask before changing?

Surgical masks can be worn continuously, up to four (4) hours, or until dirty or damaged. Surgical masks should only be removed for eating or drinking. Staff should wash their hands, either with soap and water for 20 seconds or Alcohol based hand rub after removing and discarding their surgical mask. Hand hygiene continues to be an essential procedure at all times.

During your breaks, you must maintain at least 1.5 meters distance from others, even if you otherwise work closely together in teams. To make it easier to achieve this distancing, breaks should be staggered and if possible, eating outdoors or in an office.

### If I have been wearing the surgical mask and shield carefully, will I then be less of a risk to my colleagues after I take it off for a meal or drink break?

No. Your risk level will immediately change as soon as you remove the PPE. It is essential that you then practise careful physical distancing and reapply your PPE as soon as you have finished eating and drinking.

### I don't share an office. Do I have to wear the surgical mask and eye protection?

While you are in the office by yourself with the door closed, you do not need to wear a mask or eye protection. If someone enters this space you will need to apply a surgical mask. You will also need to apply eye protection if physical distancing is not possible.

### Should I wear my surgical mask and eye protection in the break room?

Ideally a surgical mask should be kept on if temporarily entering a room for something like filling a mug of tea with hot water that will then be consumed elsewhere such as office or outdoor meal areas.

Surgical masks should not be taken off – or placed on surfaces - in areas where food and drink are consumed. Doing so poses risks of contamination of surfaces where food and drinks are prepared, stored or consumed.

If a face shield has been placed on a surface in the breakroom, the surface should be cleaned with a Clinell wipe when the face shield is reapplied.

In breakrooms it is essential to practise strict physical distancing and hand hygiene.

Further guidance can be found at the [QRG section](#) on the microsite.

### **Eating and drinking with a surgical mask and eye protection**

Surgical masks and full face shields OR safety goggles, should ALWAYS remain on and ONLY be removed immediately before eating or drinking. Once you have finished eating and drinking, please immediately put on a new surgical mask and face shield or safety goggles. When PPE is removed, it is ESSENTIAL to maintain at least 1.5 metres physical distancing.

Please try to hydrate with more volume and less frequently, to reduce the need to handle your surgical mask or full face shield. Sipping water frequently is discouraged to protect yourself.

Talk with your line manager and teams with regards staggering meal breaks to permit physical distancing in break rooms.

Where possible, please eat and drink in outdoor areas.

### **Can I use the same surgical mask after my break?**

No. Surgical masks should be discarded if removed and replaced with a new surgical mask after your break. Your face shield should not be placed on a table with food.

### **I work in a non-clinical area and do not have access to surgical masks, face shield or goggles. Where can I get these from?**

The PPE distribution team are actively supporting this major change and will be proactively distributing PPE to all sites and to areas that have typically not required this type of PPE.

Your manager is also able to assist you and will contact the PPE team to deliver a supply to your area.

### **What do I do if my face shield is fogging up?**

Ensure your face mask is fitted correctly over your nose. Pinch the metal bar at the top of the mask and mould it over your nose to ensure a tight seal.

### **I wear reading/prescription glasses. Does this mean I do not need to wear a face shield or safety goggles?**

Reading or prescription glasses do not offer protection at the same level as correct PPE – you must still wear the face shield or safety goggles over your glasses if you are required to wear eye protection.

### **I am finding it difficult to tolerate wearing the surgical mask plus the face shield (or the surgical mask plus the safety goggles). What should I do?**

Request safety goggles instead or if you currently have that item and would like to use a full face shield instead, request one.

Many staff who will now be using this PPE will have little or no prior experience with it. Give yourself a chance to become familiar with using it and you might find it becomes easier for you to tolerate the PPE. It is also essential to remember that protecting yourself and colleagues is of great importance, so we ask that you try to persist. If you still have concerns, speak to your manager.

### **Should managers be assisting staff to have scheduled safe breaks from the PPE?**

Yes. These can be in conjunction with usual breaks or in addition to these.

### **When I go to the bathroom, do I need to remove and discard my surgical mask and remove my face shield or safety goggles?**

No. You do not need to remove and discard your surgical mask. You should continue to wear your surgical mask plus your full face shield or safety goggles. Doing so, does not contaminate your surgical mask or full face shield or safety goggles. This will not pose any infectious risk to you, your colleagues or patients.

### **At what point should I apply and remove my mask when entering and leaving the hospital?**

Upon entry to all Western Health sites, staff are required to apply a surgical mask as early as possible. Screening stations at entry points now have surgical masks available for staff.

Bins and hygiene stations are available at exit points for removal and disposal of surgical masks. If leaving the hospital direct from a clinical area the surgical mask can be disposed in a yellow bin. If leaving the hospital from a non-clinical area the surgical mask can be disposed in a standard landfill bin at the hospital exit/nearest point to the exit. Please perform hand hygiene before and after removing your mask.

Upon leaving work, unless an exception applies, the Department of Health and Human Services now requires people in metropolitan Melbourne or Mitchell Shire to wear a mask or a face covering. Western Health is providing staff with cloth masks to assist compliance with this new requirement. This includes when travelling on public transport or in a car with people outside your household. More information can be found [here](#). Line managers will manage the distribution of cloth masks to their teams.

### **Can I wear a cloth mask at work?**

Non-medical cloth masks (or other face coverings) can be used by staff outside of the work environment and in the community. Cloth masks are not defined as PPE so are unsuitable to be worn in the work setting, but they do play a role in preventing exposure to COVID-19 and reducing its transmission. Please refer to this [link](#) from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for more advice about masks and face coverings in the community.

Western Health will provide staff with cloth masks that can be worn to/from work, and in the community. Line managers will manage the distribution of cloth masks to their teams.

# HOW TO WEAR A MEDICAL MASK SAFELY

## Do's →



Wash your hands before touching the mask



Inspect the mask for tears or holes



Find the top side, where the metal piece or stiff edge is



Ensure the colored-side faces outwards



Place the metal piece or stiff edge over your nose



Cover your mouth, nose, and chin



Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides



Avoid touching the mask



Remove the mask from behind the ears or head



Keep the mask away from you and surfaces while removing it



Discard the mask immediately after use preferably into a closed bin



Wash your hands after discarding the mask

# HOW TO WEAR A MEDICAL MASK SAFELY

## Don'ts →



Do not use a ripped or damp mask



Do not wear the mask only over mouth or nose



Do not wear a loose mask



Do not touch the front of the mask



Do not remove the mask to talk to someone or do other things that would require touching the mask



Do not leave your used mask within the reach of others



Do not re-use the mask