

Guidance for Primary Care

Providing masks to patients

Friday, 12 August 2022

Guidance for general practice and community clinics regarding masks provided to patients

At a recent Primary Care meeting, a question was raised about the most appropriate mask to provide to a patient or their support persons who attends a General Practice and who don't have their own mask. Some practices are currently handing out P2/N95 masks to patients who attend their clinics.

It is important to note that P2/N95 masks (also called particulate filter respirators or PFRs) require the wearer to be fit tested to ensure the mask type is appropriate and that the size suits the individual. This provides maximum protection to the wearer and minimizes the chances of leakage through a poorly fitting mask. When the Queensland Health pandemic response guidance advises that P2/N95 masks be worn, it is recommended that all staff wear this type of mask. Staff should be fit tested and then do a fit check each time a mask is worn, this ensures that the respirator is properly applied. See the PPE escalation guidance here [Pandemic response guidance \(health.qld.gov.au\)](https://www.health.qld.gov.au/pandemic-response-guidance).

For a patient or their support person who attends the practice, Queensland Health recommends that practices provide a flat surgical mask. A properly worn surgical mask provides an appropriate level of 'source protection' should the person have COVID-19 or another respiratory illness.

The mask needs to be 'well-fitted', meaning it covers the nose and mouth and conforms well to the face. The staff member should verbally instruct the person to perform hand hygiene, to bend the wire insert inside the top of the mask above their nose, for it to sit flush with the skin at the top and to adjust the mask to ensure that it doesn't slip. After the mask is adjusted, the person should be asked to clean their hands again, and not to touch their mask once it is in place.

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