How to support mask wearing

COVID-19 worker supports

We all share accountability for creating a workplace where people feel safe, healthy and valued. This begins by talking about respect and safety and doing the right thing to protect ourselves and each other.

Our top priority is to ensure the health and well-being of all Albertans. That includes standing up for safety, being alert for hazards and speaking up, and sharing safety knowledge with others.

AHS requires mask wearing

- *All staff, physicians and volunteers* are required to mask in all patient areas and public areas at all times. We are all required to mask in other areas where we cannot maintain a minimum physical distance of two metres or six feet at all times.
- We also require *all patients* and visitors to be masked when leaving any inpatient room to move to other areas in the facility. Masks must cover the nose and mouth.
- If a patient is *unable to wear a mask* for medical or other reasons, please engage the health care team to work collaboratively with them to find the most appropriate and safest solution for the situation.

You may see patients, clients, visitors or colleagues not wearing a mask for medical or other reasons. You can encourage mask wearing by staying calm and respectful, and showing kindness. *Ask. Listen. Share. Connect.*

Here are some steps to a safe and respectful conversation:

Step 1: Ask and Listen

Be open and curious. Try to understand the other person's perspective.

- "I noticed you are not wearing a mask today. Can I ask why?" or
- "Help me to understand why you are not wearing a mask today?"

Step 2: Share and Connect

Show empathy:

- "That sounds really difficult. I have felt that way at times as well."

Step 3: Share your safety knowledge

Once you have an understanding, explain why wearing a mask is important.

- "AHS requires mask wearing. Wearing a mask is one of the most effective ways to protect each other from COVID-19, along with physical distancing, hand washing and staying home when we're not feeling well."

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Step 4: *Work towards possible solutions*

Possible reasons	Possible responses
1. Lost or broken mask	Offer them a new one.
2. Uncomfortable to wear	"Have you tried…?"

- applying moisturizer to your face first
- adjusting the fit on the nose
- twisting the elastics to adjust the position, using extenders or ear savers

You could offer an alternate mask which may be more comfortable.

See *Guidance to Help Make Continuous Masking Work for You* for more suggestions.

3. Anxious or claustrophobic	"I've heard chewing gum can help" or "*Taking deep breaths* can help. Try slowing counting five breaths, in through your nose and out your mouth."
4. "I'm not sick"	Explain asymptomatic transmission.

"I'm glad to hear you are feeling well. People can transmit COVID-19 even when they don't have symptoms. That is why we all must wear masks at all times."

5. Masks aren't effective	"Wearing a mask is one of the most effective ways to protect each other from COVID-19, along with physical distancing, hand washing and staying home when we're not feeling well."

If a person is still hesitant to wear a mask, remember the best way to protect yourself at work is your use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- *No patient shall be denied service* in AHS because they cannot or will not wear a mask.
- If staff safety is otherwise at risk (e.g. because of harassing or violent behaviours), get help and/or leave if possible. Engage your leader, Protective Services or activate the appropriate emergency response code.
- If you are concerned about a co-worker not wearing a mask, talk to your leader.

- If you aren't sure what to do, ask your leader for help or call Protective Services at 1-888-999-3770.
- See *The Use of Masks During COVID-19 Directive* for more information.

Check out Insite for the latest information:

- *COVID-19 page*
- *PPE page*
- *Self-care and communication strategies for COVID-19 screening stations*

Remember you're not alone. We're in this together. We'll get through it together.

⚠ **Leave and get help if you ever feel unsafe.** *Call Protective Services (1-888-999-3770)* or use your *local emergency response protocol* (e.g. Code White).

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