

Frequently asked questions

Wearing masks

Do I need to wear a mask to and from work?

No, wearing a mask to and from work is a personal preference. However, if you are travelling in the community where physical distancing cannot be reliably maintained mask, wearing a mask is recommended.

How often should I change my mask?

Masks can generally be used for a period of around 4 hours. A mask can be removed to replace with another after the 4-hour period, for meal or drink breaks or if wet or soiled.

If the mask is removed, it should be disposed of safely and replaced with a new mask. A guide is available on the Metro North COVID-19 extranet to help you [safely apply and remove your mask](#).

It is important that you do not touch the mask while it is on. If the front of the mask is touched (for example, to adjust nose fitting), wash your hands immediately before doing anything else.

Do I have to wear a mask?

Yes, all Metro North staff (clinical and non-clinical) are always required to wear a mask while at work. The only exception is when you are alone in an office.

Masks must be:

- Worn properly - covering the nose and mouth - at all times.
- The darker coloured side should face outward.
- The mask will need to be removed for eating and drinking and once removed, should be disposed of and replaced with a new mask.
- Staff must wear provided flat surgical masks and cannot wear homemade masks while in the workplace.

There are different levels of surgical mask. What level of mask must I wear?

- **Level 1** surgical mask is appropriate for all visitors. When these are not available, level 2 flat surgical masks can be used.
- **Level 2** surgical flat surgical mask is appropriate for all clinical and non-clinical staff.
- **Level 3** flat surgical mask usage should be limited to where there is a risk of splash of blood and/or body fluid. Usually worn when undertaking a clinical procedure.

Will I be provided with a mask or do I have to bring my own?

There are strict standards that must be fulfilled for masks used in clinical practice (that is in a healthcare workplace). We are not recommending cloth or homemade masks for use in our workplace as we can't guarantee their quality or safety. Please use the masks provided onsite.

Cloth or homemade masks are reasonable for use in some community settings, for example on public transport and in supermarkets. We do allow visitors or carers to wear cloth or homemade masks if they prefer.

Where do we get masks from?

For directorate staff, please contact your Incident Management team working from your Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) for instructions how to order your masks.

For staff based in Block 7, masks are currently collected from Level 14 Executive reception.

From Tuesday 25 August 2020, there will be a concierge on Level 2 Block 7 who will provide each staff member with a mask on entry to the building.

Mask orders for sites not located within the proximity of Herston campus can be requested from MNHHS-PPE-Supply@health.qld.gov.au.

What happens if my mask breaks or is damaged – should I get a new one?

If the mask breaks or is damaged, it must be discarded safely and replaced with a new one. Ensure you perform hand hygiene when you remove the mask.

What happens if my mask gets wet?

If your mask is soiled or wet, remove it (using the ear loops or ties), discard it in a waste receptacle, perform hand hygiene and apply a new mask.

How do I dispose of my used mask?

If you take your mask off, you must throw it out. In clinical areas, you must dispose of used masks in a clinical waste bin. In non-clinical areas, you can dispose of masks in a general waste bin – preferably one with a plastic bin liner.

If I touch my mask, do I have to replace it?

No, you do not need to replace your mask. It is important that you perform hand hygiene immediately after touching your mask.

What about eating and drinking? Can I remove my mask to do this?

If the mask is removed for eating, it should be discarded, hand hygiene performed, and a new mask applied. Please perform hand hygiene immediately after doing so.

How do I stop the mask from hurting my nose?

Wearing masks can feel uncomfortable at times but they are an important measure to keep you, our patients and visitors safe. There is a useful guide available on the extranet to support clinical staff with [facial skin protection](#) when wearing masks. These strategies apply to people wearing surgical masks and may be used to prevent the mask from hurting your nose.

How do I stop my glasses from fogging up?

Firstly, always check you have a good fit for your mask – check the nose and upper cheek moulding and a good fit with your earloops or top tie.

You can try washing your glasses with soapy water. Shake off any excess after your wash, let them air dry or you can gently dry off the lenses with a soft tissue. This should prevent the lenses fogging up when the face mask is worn.

How do I put on surgical mask correctly?

Please refer to this guide on the [Metro North COVID-19 Extranet](#) for how to safely apply and remove surgical masks.

I have a medical condition. Do I still have to wear a mask?

All Metro North employees are required to wear a surgical mask while at work. Employees with a medical condition and unable to wear a mask should discuss this with their line manager.

I am a vulnerable staff member. Should I be working from home now that everyone needs to wear masks?

At this stage, there is no requirement for substantial change to our COVID Safe work practices.

Employees should discuss individual situations with their line manager to ensure that an appropriate risk assessment is conducted, and plan is put in place for both now, and if the situation escalates. Please refer to [Metro North COVID – 19 extranet under Human Resources](#) for further information.

I work in a Metro North facility, but I am not a Metro North staff member. Do I need a mask and is one provided for me by Metro North?

Whilst working in a Metro North facility, all personnel are required to wear surgical masks.

There are some non-clinical workplaces on Metro North sites that are quite separate to our facilities. These sites are recommended to wear masks, but this is up to the primary employer to determine the approach to be taken by employees - e.g. STARS building sites.