



**1 September 2020**

Dear colleagues,

Two new cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed in Queensland overnight, both from the West Moreton region. One was a known close contact associated with the Staines Memorial College, with the other a healthcare worker at Ipswich Hospital. The contact tracing team is working hard to identify the potential transmission causes and to identify further contacts.

Whilst it is encouraging to only have a small increase in cases today, it is also a timely reminder that we all need to be diligent in our adherence to prevention measures including **washing your hands, staying physically distant, wearing your mask at work and in crowded places and staying home if you're sick.**

Today I'd like to highlight today's mask-wearing tips & tricks vidcast hosted by Catherine Watson, Anne Dowe and Meaghan Poulton. Together, the three provided helpful information on how to adjust to wearing masks at work and clever ways to make them more comfortable. The vidcast is already up [online](#) for those who missed it so if you have the time, please go and watch. For those who can't, here are a few important points:

#### **Wearing masks: what you need to know**

- **Applying and removing** your mask needs to be applied properly to avoid cross-contamination and maintain the efficacy of the mask. Make sure you wash your hands beforehand, open up the folds, pinch the metal side and place it on your face. Depending on what style mask you have, loop the strings behind your ears or tie-up the straps at the back of your head. These straps don't need to be tied into a bow, just a simple knot is enough. The [COVID-19 extranet site](#) has detailed instructions on properly applying your mask.
- **When eating or drinking**, remove your mask and replace it with a new one afterwards. Remembering to wash your hands before and after handling your mask.
- **Avoid touching your mask** after it's securely on your face. If you need to make an adjustment, be sure to wash your hands before and after.
- **Replace your mask every four hours**, or sooner if it is soiled, damaged or moist.
- **Wear your mask on public transport**, even though it's not mandatory, I strongly advise anyone who is catching public transport to keep their mask on until they disembark (I also wear mine to the supermarket).

#### **Tips and tricks**

- **If your mask is loose**, try linking a few paperclips together and hook it across to the other side of your ear so it's more secure. You can also cross over the ear loops before placing over your ears which will not only help your mask fit a little better but it will also gape slightly on the sides, allowing for more airflow. Because

the flat surgical mask is a barrier tool for the mouth and nose, it's ok for there to be a small opening on the side – as it's not a fitted mask, this does not compromise on its effectiveness to serve as a nose and mouth barrier.

- **If you wear glasses**, one of the biggest tips is to try to breathe in through your nose, and then down, outward through your mouth. This might feel a bit different at first, but it's one of the best ways to avoid your glasses from fogging up.
- **If you have a tie-up mask**, it's easier to tie-up the top and then the bottom, keeping in mind that the nose must be covered. To make sure it doesn't slide down, tie-up the upper strands above your ear level.
- **Pop in a mint**, if you have a particularly garlic-y lunch! Keep some gum or mints with you so you can clear out the smell of your leftovers from lunch.

### Mask mind-set

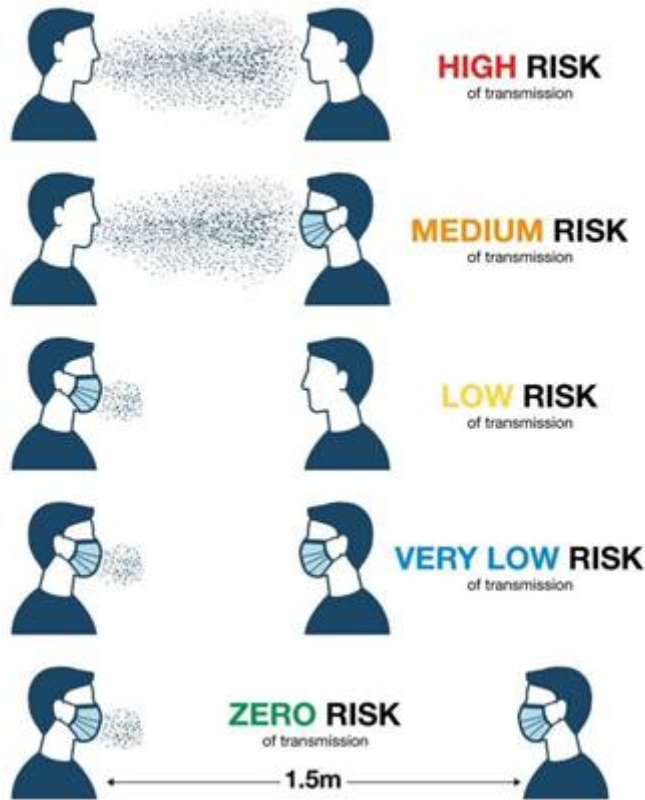
- **Breathing:** for those of you who aren't used to wearing masks for long periods, it can be a bit of an adjustment. Even though it feels like we feel like we take air in through our mouth, it really comes from the lower abdominal muscles. When it feels like we can't breathe in via our mouth, our body sends an anxious signal to our mind. Try to use your lower muscles to take in deep, slow breathes and help your mind adjust to this change.
- **Feeling claustrophobic:** try to manage this feeling using the breathing tip above. Swap short, stale breaths for normal, deep breaths to help adjust to wearing a mask.
- **Distraction is key:** you will find after a day or two of wearing a mask you will get used to it! Try not to think about it on your face and continue to breathe, talk and work as you normally would. The key is to make sure it's on properly and comfortably as soon as you put it on, so you aren't trying to rearrange it afterwards.

You've all done a great job accepting this challenge – I acknowledge that it's not normal, but then again nothing has been very normal this year!

### Why we are wearing face masks

Masks are not the be-all and end-all of stopping the spread of infectious diseases, but in conjunction with other measures, it is a useful tool to use. If everyone does their bit, which we all are, then we are all working together to prevent any community transmission of COVID-19. As a healthcare service, we are wearing masks to help protect our patients and each other. Your safety is our number one priority. I can assure you we have suitable amounts of PPE in stock, and if you have any questions or concerns, please speak to your line manager.

## How effective are face masks?



There will be another COVID-19 vidcast tomorrow at 11 am, so please tune and ask any questions you have regarding the virus and our response. Thank you again to everyone for continuing to do the right thing.

Kind regards,  
 Dr Liz Rushbrook  
 Metro North Incident Commander

### Metro North HHS – Overview of Cases\*

HHS	Patients being managed by HHS					FEVER Clinics			
	Total In-patients			Virtual Ward / HITH / or similar	Deaths **	Total cases managed by HHS (including recovered) ***	# of clinics	Presentations	
	ICU Pts		ICU-VENTILATED					Last 24 hrs	TOTAL^
	ICU-NOT VENTILATED	ICU-VENTILATED							
MN	0	0	0	0	3	342	6	1,220	78,265
TOTAL									

\*With effect 1 September 2020, 1000

\*\*Metro North has three recorded deaths (one person a return traveller into NSW, who passed away in NSW)

\*\*\* These numbers reflect the cases being managed by Metro North.

