

# PPE Fit Testing

## FACT SHEET

May 2021

### What is the purpose of fit testing?

Fit testing ensures staff can choose and effectively use the correct size and brand of respirator P2/N95 mask for their individual face. As individual faces have different characteristics and shapes, fit testing allows healthcare workers to test they have an adequate seal for the respirator mask. This will help protect against illness or injury due to respiratory hazards in the workplace.

### Who needs fit testing?

The **Designated COVID-19 Hospital Network Direction** has come into force and Health Service employees must comply with personal protective equipment obligations if they:

- a. work in or enter a **COVID-19 ward**; or
- b. provide **occasional or intermittent care**; or
- c. provide care to a **diagnosed person** or **quarantined international arrival** in an emergency department; or
- d. work in an intensive care unit during a time when a **diagnosed person** or **quarantined international arrival** is receiving care in the intensive care unit; or
- e. transport a **diagnosed person** by ambulance or aeromedical services, including from a **quarantine facility** to a **hospital**.

Individuals who work in any of these situations must be fit tested for an appropriate respirator such as a P2/N95 mask. This also applies to Hotel Quarantine workers.

All other healthcare workers will be offered fit testing following completion of the initial phase of fit testing.

### How will fit testing happen across Metro North?

Metro North has engaged a qualified external provider to deliver fit testing as well as developing the capacity within the CSDS team.

Fit testing will happen as close to your work area as possible. Identified groups will be notified of dates and locations where fit testing is available at their relevant facility.

Identified work areas will be asked to nominate an appropriate clinical coordinator to manage staff on and off the ward, with the assistance of the Health and Safety Unit where needed.

### How does it work?

Fit testing will take around 15-30 minutes per person. When you get to the testing location, you'll be asked screening questions such as whether you have any COVID-19 symptoms, when the last time you shaved your beard, or whether you've had a cigarette in the past 30 minutes.

Staff will undertake quantitative fit testing with the trainer using a condensation nuclei counter (CNC) machine in the ambient environment to measure the actual amount of leakage into the face piece. The CNC machine grows microscopic particles/aerosols to an optically detectable size. It then counts them, measuring both inside and outside the respirator.

The test involves wearing a disposable respirator mask for approximately 15 minutes and undertaking a number of specific activities. Staff may need to try more than one mask style before a result is achieved.

At the end of a successful fit test staff will be issued with a lanyard card that identifies which mask style they had a successful fit test with. Staff results will also be recorded in a centralised database and records uploaded to the TMS.

PPE should still be fit checked for every use, regardless of a fit test result.

### **What happens if I fail the fit test?**

Fit testing aims to support staff to effectively use the correct PPE for your individual face. If you are initially unable to find a suitable respiratory mask during the fit test, you will be invited back for further testing with an extended mask range to find an effective mask solution.

If you are unable to find an appropriately fitting P2/N95 mask, you should notify and work together with your line manager (and Health Service leadership if necessary) to determine an appropriate solution.

### **Do I have to shave my beard?**

Staff must take all necessary steps to ensure the proper fit and use of respirators. This means being clean-shaven or having facial hair that doesn't interfere with the fitting surfaces and the valve of the respirator. Facial hair that lies along the sealing surface of a tight-fitting respirator will stop it sealing properly.

Fit-testing must be carried out on males who are clean-shaven or have no hair between their face and the fitting surfaces of the respirator face piece. More information in relation to respiratory protection and facial hair can be found on the [Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Flyer](#) and the attached MetroNorth Fit Testing and Facial Hair FAQ's.

If staff have concerns in relation to this, they should speak with their line manager and local Safety Advisor.

### **More information**

For more information about personal protective equipment, visit the Metro North [COVID-19 – Extranet](#).