



Guidance on COVID-19

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Guidance on the use of Surgical Masks in the Healthcare Setting in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Introduction

This guidance replaces previous guidance on the use of surgical masks in healthcare settings in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance is for immediate implementation. The content will be incorporated into other Infection Prevention and Control guidance documents as they are updated.

Use of surgical masks by healthcare workers in the context of viral respiratory tract infection has two objectives:

1. To reduce the risk of droplet transmission of infection to the wearer.
2. To reduce the risk of droplet transmission of infection to others.

Use of surgical masks for these purposes is in addition to and not as a replacement for other measures to reduce the risk of transmission of infection. These measures include hand hygiene and maintaining a distance of 2 m between people whenever possible. Surgical masks must be donned correctly and should remain in place covering the nose and mouth throughout the period of use. Masks should not be moved up and down over the nose and mouth. When a mask is no longer required or if a fresh mask is needed the mask must be removed and disposed of safely as healthcare risk waste.

Guidance

- Surgical masks should be worn by healthcare workers when providing care to patients within 2m of a patient, regardless of the COVID-19 status of the patient.
- Surgical masks should be worn by all healthcare workers for all encounters, of 15 minutes or more, with other healthcare workers in the workplace where a distance of 2m cannot be maintained.

ENDS