

April 22, 2020

Dear Service Provider Organization:

Re: Recommendation for all Service Provider Organizations to implement Universal Masking

With the increasing evidence of community transmission in Simcoe Muskoka of COVID-19, it is essential that precautions be implemented to reduce the risk for all persons immediately. As the Medical Officer of Health for Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka I am strongly recommending that all Service Provider Organizations providing care to persons in the community or any congregate settings for example, group homes, implement universal masking for all such encounters. Please note that this includes encounters with asymptomatic persons.

The availability of masks does vary from setting to setting and therefore planning, prioritizing, and thoughtful use of masks is necessary. We encourage you to work with Ontario Health to obtain Personal Protective Equipment to facilitate this recommendation. The use of eye protection, if available, is recommended and increased hand hygiene is critical to reduce the risk.

General guidelines when using surgical (also called procedural) masks with asymptomatic patients during COVID-19 pandemic are as follows:

- A surgical mask can be used over the course of many patients. Conserve your mask for as long as possible, but once wet, damaged, soiled, or removed, you should immediately dispose of the mask. Take extra care when removing this mask as this is when self-contamination may occur. Don a new mask for your next set of patient encounters, extending its use for as long as possible. In some circumstances this may necessitate more than 2 masks/shift.
- It is safe to wear your mask for multiple patient encounters under these circumstances although this is not the usual recommendation during non-COVID-19 times.
- Leave the patient care area to remove the facemask and perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- Take care not to touch your facemask, and if you do, immediately perform hand hygiene.

When caring for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, healthcare workers should follow droplet/contact precautions (surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves and eye protection). Thank you for observing these important recommendations and for the care that you are providing to our vulnerable communities during this very challenging time.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL Signed By:

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Medical Officer of Health

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