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Across Somerset, our prevalence of viral respiratory infections appears to be settling. National guidance now allows for organisations to plan mask use based on local levels of risk and ICIP&C team devised RAG rating tool which can be referred to and guide you when making decisions for your organisation.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Criteria | Guidance |
| **Green** | * Low transmission across the county * Minimal outbreaks within Primary and Secondary Care * Minimal admissions due to Acute Respiratory Infections i.e. Covid/flu to Secondary Care | Follow National Guidance when assessing patients presenting with symptoms of Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) -  [C1657\_next-steps-on-infection-prevention-and-control-letter\_010622.pdf (england.nhs.uk)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/C1657_next-steps-on-infection-prevention-and-control-letter_010622.pdf)  [COVID-19: information and advice for health and care professionals - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-information-and-advice-for-health-and-care-professionals)  [NHS England » National infection prevention and control manual (NIPCM) for England](https://www.england.nhs.uk/national-infection-prevention-and-control-manual-nipcm-for-england/) |
| **Amber** | * Transmission rates increasing across the county * Increase in admissions to Secondary Care due to Acute Respiratory Infections      * Outbreaks being reported across Primary and Secondary Care | Follow National Guidance when assessing patients presenting with symptoms of ARI -see above links  **Consider introducing: -**   * Fluid repellent surgical masks (FRSM) for all staff in patient facing areas including those staff whose workspace is shared with patient waiting areas |
| **Red** | * High transmission rates across Somerset      * Significant admissions due to Acute Respiratory Infections to Secondary Care      * Multiple outbreaks across Primary and Secondary Care settings * Significant admissions due to Acute Respiratory Infections to critical care | Follow National Guidance when assessing patients presenting with symptoms of ARI -see above links    **Consider introducing: -**     * FRSM for all staff across the surgery/practice. * Face coverings for all individuals attending the organisation. |

It remains the choice for any colleague, patient or visitor to continue wearing a face maks if they chose to do so.

Face masks should continue to be made available for those who wish to continue wearing them.

**Face covering are required in the following situations: -**

* Clinical settings when working or visiting with suspected or confirmed covid 19 patients
* Reviewing/assessing individuals who present with respiratory type symptoms (flu, covid or other), should be encouraged to wear face masks, these can be stood down if PCR or LFD negative.
* Staff should wear a mask when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. The mask should be applied prior to entering the room
* When undertaking **aerosol generating procedures** FFP3 must be worn.
* Caring for patients who are immunocompromised or at high riksk form infections

**Face Coverings are optional:**

Providing no person is known to have Covid

* Outpatient clinics
* Community staff
* Vaccination clinics

However service users, colleagues and visitors will be able to choose to continue to wear a mask if they wish or if a risk assessment indicates that this mitigation would still be a benefit to them.

Lots of people still have concerns and worries regarding the risk of catching Covid-19 and respiratory infections and therefore app patietn’s should be asked if they would prefer healthcare colleagues to wear a mask whilst caring for them.

**Colleagues with symptoms of cough, cold or virus who feel well enough to work: -**

* Discussion with line manager/practice manager to assess the risk of whether to work from home or form their place of work taking into consideration nature of the work, vulnerability of patient/workforce, environment etc
* Surgical maks should be worn continuously
* Testing for Covid-19 is no longer required unless directed by UKHSA

Respiratory infections spread easily between people particualry within a health care environement, and it is important to remain vigilant and be aware of actions that can be taken to reduce the transmission of infection:

**Risk assess –** check with your patients and service users that they do not have current respiratory sysptoms to facilitate safe care and assessment

**Hand Hygiene** – follow 5 moments for hand hygiene (link below)

**Ventilation** – let fresh air in, maximise ventilation

**Environment** – help keep you environment clean and tidy ensuring wipes are available in all areas.

**Distancing** – try to maintain good spacing

**Face masks** – ensure bins are provided to safely discard face coverings

This tool is for guidance to assist you when making decision regarding the mask wearing and other measures to minimise the spread of respiratory based infections. This tool does not advise which mask should be utilised as NHS Somerset will advise that a risk assessment is performed taking into consideration the individual, task, training etc.

[Your-5-moments-for-hand-hygiene-Care-Home-September-2020.pdf (infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk)](https://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/content/uploads/2021/04/Your-5-moments-for-hand-hygiene-Care-Home-September-2020.pdf)

