

Update on Mask Wearing in Hemodialysis Units

April 14, 2023

Effective April 6, 2023, wearing masks is no longer mandatory in most health care settings. You are still encouraged to wear a mask if you wish, and in some instances, you may be asked to wear a mask. If you have questions about the information below, please talk to your hemodialysis team.

1. BC has lifted some pandemic restrictions including mandatory mask-wearing in hospitals, assisted living and care homes. What does this mean for you?

Patients:

- You are not required to wear a mask in the hemodialysis waiting room or during treatments unless a staff member asks you to do so after assessing you for any infection.
- You are asked to wear a mask at the beginning and end of your treatment and when your nurse is working with your dialysis access. This is to prevent your dialysis access from becoming infected.
- If you feel unwell, even if you don't think you have COVID, please wear a mask.

Staff:

- In certain situations, staff will continue to wear masks and other protective gear (e.g., face shields, gowns, gloves), but they are no longer required to do so in all cases.
- Examples of when masks and other protective gear will be required:
 - When starting and stopping dialysis
 - When cleaning equipment used during dialysis
 - When there is a likelihood of blood or body fluid contact
 - When caring for a patient who is assessed to be at risk of an infectious illness

2. What can I do to protect myself from respiratory and other infections?

- Wash your hands regularly.
- Wear a mask in crowded places when it is difficult to maintain distance.
- Keep your vaccinations up-to-date, especially influenza and COVID-19.
 - Appointments are available across the province at pharmacies and public health clinics.
 - Appointments can be made by going to the [Get Vaccinated](#) website or phoning 1-883-838-2323.

3. Should I still come for my dialysis treatment if I feel sick or have tested positive for COVID-19?

Yes, BUT please call the dialysis unit first to let us know about your illness and symptoms, so we can take care of you properly. If you become very sick, you may need to be admitted to the hospital.

4. What should I do if I have or have had recent close contact with a family member or friend who has COVID-19 or another respiratory illness?

The BC Centre for Disease Control website provides useful information on next steps if you have had recent close contact with a family member or friend who has tested positive or has symptoms of COVID-19. www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19.

5. Is this a permanent change?

The Public Health Officer and Ministry of Health will continue to monitor respiratory illness in BC. During respiratory seasons (typically November – March), some measures may be put in place to keep everyone safe.