



## Face Coverings and Personal Protective Equipment – managing the risk of COVID-19

### Face Coverings:

The University of Edinburgh is managing the risk of COVID-19 by ensuring suitable arrangements are in place, including measures to encourage physical distancing, hand/respiratory hygiene, limiting numbers in buildings etc.

Currently the use of face coverings on public transport, certain public indoor spaces e.g. shops, banks, libraries and indoor communal settings e.g. workplace corridors, is mandatory in Scotland. See the [Scottish Government guidance](#) for a full list of the indoor spaces in which face coverings are mandatory.

It is mandatory to wear face coverings in University libraries, study spaces and in all University of Edinburgh buildings where people are moving about and where physical distancing cannot be guaranteed.

However staff and students should be aware that there are certain conditions and hidden disabilities that may preclude persons from wearing face masks and should ensure they understand and respect this.

A face covering can be a covering of any type, except a face shield, that covers the mouth and nose. It is recommended that it is made of cloth or other textiles and should be two, and preferably three layers thick, and through which you can breathe. Religious face coverings that cover the mouth and the nose count as face coverings for these purposes.

Face coverings can be removed when eating and drinking, however should be worn when entering and leaving these areas as physical distancing may be more difficult.

Face coverings are not classed as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as they do not protect people from work-related hazardous substances. However they may protect others, not the wearer, against Coronavirus.

### Communication:

Transparent face coverings which assist communication may be worn.

Face shields - evidence shows that they do not provide adequate protection and therefore they should only be worn when physical distancing can be maintained or in combinations with a face covering.

## Use of gloves:

The wearing of disposable gloves in the workplace for a purpose other than those identified through risk assessment (such as in a laboratory or workshop area) **is not permitted**. The virus may still exist on gloves, in the same way as it would on hands, and be transferred from gloves onto other hard surfaces. After wearing gloves, people may wash their hands less often as they think they are protected, which increases the risk of spreading infection, especially when touching the mouth or eyes.

## Personal Protective Equipment

The University aims to take all reasonable measures to comply with the 2 metre physical distancing requirement and therefore it is not expected that general risk assessments will identify a need for additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the majority of situations.

Additional PPE for protection against coronavirus may be identified in risk assessment for certain activities e.g. face visors.

In clinical and practical areas of R(D)SVS staff should change out of their face covering used in general areas to a face mask.

Examples of face masks used to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace are Type IIR masks (disposable surgical/hygiene), re-useable “FFP2 equivalent masks” and N95 masks (see appendix 1 for photos).

Tight fitting respirators i.e. FFP (Filtered Face Piece) should continue to be worn if previously identified in risk assessment e.g. for protection against other hazards or health conditions i.e. significant levels of dust, known animal allergy.

FFP3 respirators require face fit testing and training/instruction to ensure they are correctly worn and a tight fit is achieved.

If PPE is identified to be required in risk assessment it becomes mandatory.

## Guidance on the Safe Use of Face Coverings/Masks

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering/mask on, and after removing it
- When wearing a face covering/mask, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could pass other contamination to them from your hands.
- Change and wash your face covering/mask daily.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it.
- If the material is washable, wash in warm soapy water, preferably in a washing machine, at the highest temperature suitable for the fabric. If it is not washable, dispose of it carefully into general waste bins.

**Physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene are the most important and effective things we can all do to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.**

**Further Information:**

1. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/face-coverings-and-face-masks.htm#surgical-face-masks#>
2. [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak)
3. [https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/health-safety-travel/hygiene-and-health#uoe\\_featurebox\\_e28132bddc95dbc82568827fd4050e2bd](https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/news/covid-19/health-safety-travel/hygiene-and-health#uoe_featurebox_e28132bddc95dbc82568827fd4050e2bd)

## Appendix 1 – Examples of Face Coverings, Face Masks and Respirators

### Face Covering

Face coverings are mainly intended to protect others and not the wearer. When used correctly, they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main sources of transmitting coronavirus (COVID-19).



### Face Mask

#### **1. Type IIR (also known as surgical/medical or spit mask)**

Surgical face masks are designed to be worn in medical settings to limit the spread of infection. Unlike face coverings, they:

- are manufactured to a recognised standard
- are resistant to droplets of fluids and splashes



#### **2. N95**

An **N95 mask** is a particulate-filtering face-piece respirator that meets the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) N95 classification of air filtration.



### 3. FFP2 Equivalent

- The WHO has stated that multi-layered cotton masks and surgical masks are equivalent in terms of efficiency in reducing transmission of COVID-19 (see further information above). The R(D)SVS has therefore provided students with a high quality cloth face mask (multi-layered, tight weave, reasonable facial fit), to be used in a clinical or practical environment when physical distancing requirements cannot be met.



### FFP3 (Filtered Face Piece) Respirator

- Tight Fitting respirators used for protection against allergens/dust etc.
- Currently used by NHS during aerosol generating procedures.
- Requires face fit testing.
- Can be disposable or re-useable.
- CE marked and tested to European Standards

