

## PEMBROKE REGIONAL HOSPITAL

# MEMO

---

**TO:** All Staff and Physicians

**FROM:** Infection Prevention and Control and  
Occupational Health and Safety

**DATE:** December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**SUBJECT:** PPE requirements and work self  
isolation

As COVID-19 cases within our community continue to rise, it is imperative that staff and physicians remain diligent about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use in order to protect themselves, their patients, co-workers and families.

**A few reminders regarding universal PPE use:**

1. All staff and physicians working in clinical areas must follow universal masking and eye protection at all times. PPE can only be removed when on break in a dedicated break area where 6 feet physical distancing between co-workers can be maintained.
2. Staff and physicians providing direct patient care or EVS staff cleaning patient environments in high risk departments (ED, ICU and 2A) must follow universal N95 respirator use and eye protection at all times.
3. Patients should be advised (if able) to don a surgical/ procedure mask anytime a healthcare worker, visitor or essential caregiver is in their room or if they are ambulating in a shared room (eg. using the washroom).

Please refer to the *Universal Masking and Eye Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic Policy*.

It is also important for staff and physicians to be aware that surgical/ procedure masks are still considered effective protection against COVID-19 (Omicron). According to the revised Directive 5- Droplet and Contact, precautions must be used at a minimum by health care

workers when providing care to patients with suspect and confirmed COVID-19. This includes a gown, gloves, eye protection and properly fitting surgical/ procedure mask. As an interim precaution in light of the uncertainty around the mechanisms of transmission of the COVID-19 Omicron variant of concern, Directive 5 encourages the use of N95 respirators as an alternate to surgical masks for our confirmed positive and suspect COVID-19 patients, providing an added layer of protection. This means, if a healthcare worker is wearing a surgical/ procedure mask, eye protection, gown and gloves to provide routine care to a patient who is later found to be COVID positive, the healthcare worker generally will not be deemed a high risk contact (keeping in mind that each situation is different and will be assessed based on risk)

### **COVID-19 Hospital Acquired Cases:**

Over the last several days we have had 2 confirmed cases of COVID-19 identified in our admitted patients, one patient from surgical floor and one patient from 2<sup>nd</sup> medical. In consultation with Dr. Cushman and the Renfrew County and District Health Unit, the Infection Control and Occupational Health teams have established a contact tracing and case management plan. At this time we are not considered to be in outbreak but are closely monitoring the situation. In order to prevent an outbreak from occurring we are asking that all staff and physicians assist with the following:

1. Closely monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Complete your COVID screening truthfully prior to entry into the workplace. Contact Occupational Health/ Delegate if you have questions/ concerns or have failed the screening questions (ext 8200). **Do not report to work if you are feeling unwell.**
2. Closely monitor your patients for changes in symptoms. Immediately isolate and test any patients exhibiting signs/ symptoms of COVID-19. Notify IPAC (ext 7106) or hospital charge nurse after hours (ext 6820) if your patient is exhibiting any new symptoms of COVID-19.

### **Work Self Isolation Protocol:**

We know there may be times when not having enough staff could present a significant risk to patient care and other staff. Work self-isolation is a measure that helps to mitigate this issue while balancing the risk of infection to patients and other staff. Following a regional approach, PRH has adapted a work self isolation guide which allows the organization to view each scenario on a case-by-case basis, bringing back some individuals with safety practices in place who would otherwise be directed by public health rules to self isolate at home. **We request that staff and physicians who are currently off work due to failed COVID-19 screening be prepared to discuss work self isolations plans at any time.**

Any staff or physicians returned to work under work self isolation will have specific safety rules to follow. This will include (at a minimum) the following directions:

1. Rapid antigen testing prior to each shift
2. Taking temperature twice a day
3. Travel to and from work in private vehicle or wear surgical/procedure mask in public transit
4. Adhere to universal masking recommendations at all times on the property, maintain physical distancing (remaining greater than 2m/6 ft from others) except when providing direct care, and perform meticulous hand hygiene.
5. Do not eat meals or take breaks in a shared space with colleagues.
6. The healthcare worker (HCW) on work self-isolation should not work in multiple locations

The Omicron variant is causing a drastic rise in COVID-19 cases. As a result, we will likely see policy/ procedure changes in the coming days. All information will be shared via memo and education. As this is a rapidly evolving situation, please help to keep your co-workers informed of any updates as they are received.