



# Further guidance on N95 masks for MIQ workers

## Media release

26 November 2020

The Ministry of Health has provided updated guidance on the use of N95 masks for staff working in managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) facilities.

The updated guidance follows a Ministry review of concerns that border workers at isolation and quarantine facilities could catch COVID-19 through transmission of the virus through the air.

“Protecting our frontline MIQ workers is a top priority in the ongoing effort to eliminate COVID-19 and this updated guidance will help do that,” Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield said.

“The provision of appropriate PPE has always been an important part of protecting the health of our frontline workers. We are always improving our approach to this, to reflect what we learn from experience and the growing global knowledge of how the virus operates.”

The key change in the new guidance is that N95/P2 masks are recommended when 2 metre physical distancing cannot be maintained from a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19, for example if you have to enter a confined space, such as a guest’s room.

An important principle is matching the recommended PPE to the specific situation and risk individuals may face, so wearing these masks will depend on the situation and will not always be required.

This applies to healthcare staff when providing direct ‘hands-on care’ and when undertaking or assisting with daily health checks of people who are confirmed or probable cases.

It may apply to staff in other roles (i.e. NZDF staff) if they are required to perform tasks that require them to be within 2 metres from a person who is a confirmed or probable case e.g. when escorting for exercise. This will apply in quarantine facilities and quarantine zones of dual-use managed

isolation and quarantine facilities; and

- They should also be worn when transferring a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 from one facility to another or from a facility to hospital; and
- Staff requiring a N95/P2 mask must be trained in fitting them including a check for good fit. N95/P2 masks can't be used with beards, as facial hair limits protection by preventing an appropriate seal against the face.

Fit testing and training for health workforce staff in the facilities is well underway and expected to be completed early next month.

The Ministry will continue to monitor the measures in place and further adapt as required, including in regard to the use of masks in non-MIQ settings.

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