



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

Face Coverings – general areas

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.

However, the Scottish Government has recommended the use of face coverings in indoor areas where physical distancing measures are difficult to implement. Evidence suggests that wearing a face covering may reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

A face covering could be a scarf or other material that covers the mouth and nose.

We recognise that for staff and students it will be a personal choice to follow these recommendations regarding face coverings as they travel to and around the campus, and we are supportive of those who wish to do this.

The use of face coverings does not replace physical distancing or hand and respiratory hygiene measures (for example, washing hands and covering mouth if you cough), but could be used alongside these measures if desired.

The wearing of face masks in general areas is not compulsory; however, this will be kept under review in consideration of the latest government guidance.

Use of gloves – general areas

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.

Workplace use - masks

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has advised that in the workplace, personal protective equipment (PPE) would not be an appropriate general control measure.

The University aims to take all reasonable measures to comply with the 2m physical distancing requirement and therefore it is not expected that general risk assessments will identify a need for additional personal protective equipment.

However, in certain work situations physical distancing cannot be achieved and therefore risk assessment may identify tasks/areas where masks are required to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

Examples of masks used to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace could be type IIR masks (disposable surgical/hygiene), N95 and FFP2/3 masks.

If masks are identified as being required to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, they will be supplied by the employer. Advice on suitability can be given by the Easter Bush Health & Safety department.

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 contaminate them with germs from your hands
- Continue to wash your hands regularly
- 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 line with manufacturer's instructions. If it is not washable, dispose of it carefully into biohazard or clinical waste streams.

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE)

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) is worn as part of normal practice for certain work-based tasks - e.g. to reduce the risks of exposure to dust, animal allergens, chemicals etc. Use and type will be determined by risk assessment. RPE is distinct from face coverings/masks as it is either a tightly fitted respirator (FFP3) or powered hood.

RPE should be worn if identified by risk assessment as normal practice for the tasks you perform. The type of RPE worn must be approved by the University of Edinburgh.