

# North York General Hospital Policy Manual

## Universal Masking Policy

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### PURPOSE:

On March 24th, North York General Hospital (NYGH) instituted a universal masking policy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This policy was in alignment with guidance issued by the Toronto Region Hospital Operations Table. On July 6th, 2020, the Table issued new guidance to include requirements for patients and visitors to wear masks or appropriate face coverings. This policy was created in response to these new guidelines.

### DEFINITIONS

Patient: An individual accessing inpatient or outpatient health services.

Visitor: A guest of the patient. At this time, only designated visitors are allowed.

PPE: Personal Protective Equipment

### POLICY:

1. Masks or face coverings are mandatory in all areas of the hospital. Any exception is at the sole discretion of NYGH and/or guidance provided by the Ministry of Health. This universal masking policy relates to patients and visitors of NYGH, specifically:
  - a. **Visitors**: a mask/face covering must always be worn
  - b. **Outpatients**: a mask/face covering must always be worn
  - c. **Inpatients**: when leaving their room (i.e. for a diagnostic test) or when in a common area of the hospital
2. While universal masking is mandatory, exceptions to the universal masking policy include:
  - a. Children under the age of 2 years old;
  - b. Patients/Visitors who have medical conditions that preclude the use of masks for extended periods of time.
3. All patients and visitors will be screened at the entrances prior to entering the hospital. Patients/Visitors will be asked a series of screening questions and will be asked to perform hand hygiene and will be provided with a hospital grade mask.
4. Patients/Visitors who are already wearing an appropriate mask or face covering (i.e. cloth mask) will be allowed to wear their own mask/face covering while at NYGH. The mask/face covering must always cover the individual's mouth, nose and chin.
5. Once on the unit, visitors who are visiting a patient who is on enhanced IPAC precautions will be required to comply with personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines as directed by unit staff. In these instances, visitors wearing a cloth mask, will be provided with a hospital mask in exchange of their cloth mask and other PPE which must be worn throughout their visit in order to safely visit with the patient.

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6. The following process will apply to patients/visitors who refuse to comply with the universal masking policy and/or indicate they meet the exception criteria as identified above:
    - a. After initial screening, the patient/visitor will be referred to the secondary screening desk.
    - b. For patients, staff at the secondary screening desk will:
      - i. Connect with the patient's most responsible physician (MRP) for a clinical assessment as to whether the patient meets the exception criteria as indicated above.
      - ii. For patients not seeing a physician, staff at secondary screening should connect with the unit/clinic staff to discuss whether the patient meets the exception criteria as indicated above.
    - c. For visitors, the visitor must provide written documentation to secondary screeners (i.e. medical note) indicating they have a medical exemption.
    - d. If it is determined that the patient/visitor does meet the exclusion criteria, they will be allowed to proceed to their appointment/visit. They will be provided with a sticker to identify that they meet the exception criteria. The sticker must always be worn while in hospital.
    - e. If it is determined that the patient/visitor does not meet the exclusion criteria (i.e. they do not have a medical condition precluding them from wearing a mask/face covering), the patient/visitor will be asked to leave the hospital.
    - f. The appointment/visit will be cancelled, and the patient/visitor will need to reschedule the appointment/visit.
  7. In instances where the visitor/patient refuses to comply with the NYGH Universal Masking policy, staff should refer to this policy and educate the patient/visitor on the ongoing evidence supporting universal masking when indoors. Should the patient/visitor continue to escalate and/or begin recording the interaction, staff should:
    - a. Remind the patient/visitor that video recording is strictly prohibited
    - b. Politely ask the patient/visitor to leave the hospital
    - c. Contact appropriate Management support (Admin on-call after hours).
    - d. Contact Security for assistance should the patient/visitor escalate
    - e. Complete a SLIP

## REFERENCES:

Toronto Region Hospital Operations Table. 2020 07 06. Recommended Guidance- Masking in Hospitals.

City of Toronto. Bylaw 541-2020: COVID-19 Mandatory Mask of Face Covering. 2020 07 06.  
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2020/law0541.pdf>

### APPENDIX A: Process Map for Patient/Visitors Refusing to Mask

#### Process for Patients/Visitors Refusing to Mask

