



By email from: cno@gov.scot

Dear colleague,

Updates to COVID-19 asymptomatic testing guidance for patient testing; adult care home staff testing; extended use of face mask guidance and launch of Covid and Flu Vaccination Autumn/Winter 2022.

Guidance for health and social care staff has evolved throughout the pandemic to reflect the latest clinical and public health advice. We are writing to set out the updated guidance for:

- Asymptomatic Patient Testing in Hospitals (guidance on this will be available in the NIPCM from today, Monday 22 August)
- Weekly asymptomatic PCR Staff Testing in Care Homes
- Extended use of face masks and face coverings guidance
- Covid and Flu Vaccination – Autumn/Winter 2022

Change to Asymptomatic Patient Testing in Hospitals Guidance

The aim of this change in policy is to adopt a proportionate approach to risk in testing policy, easing the service pressures resulting from management of individuals continuing to test positive with PCR and not being clinically infectious.

Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) including PCR Point of Care (POC) tests for asymptomatic testing should cease including testing for staff and patients. All asymptomatic testing should be carried out using Lateral Flow Devices including other non PCR POC.

This includes:

- Requirement 1 – All fully vaccinated elective surgical patients should be tested prior to procedure: the exception for unvaccinated or not fully vaccinated

From the Chief Nursing Officer, Chief Medical Officer

Professor Alex McMahon
Professor Sir Gregor Smith

22 August 2022

DL (2022) 29

Addresses

For action

NHS Scotland Chairs,
NHS Scotland Chief Executives,
Chief Officers Health and Social Care Partnerships
Local Authorities
HR Directors,
Medical Directors,
Nurse Directors,
Primary Care Leads,
Directors of Pharmacy,
Directors of Public Health,
Infection Control Managers
HAI Leads
HAI Control Managers
Adult care homes
Care at home
For information

Further Enquiries

Scottish Government
Directorate for Chief Nursing Officer
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- patients, a PCR test should be taken in advance for result to be available for the day of the planned surgery
- Requirement 2 – All planned medical admissions AND all emergency admissions (including maternity and mental health service) AND Any other patient admitted to hospital not covered in the above groups (incl hospital transfers)
 - Requirement 3 – Serial Testing, Testing Contacts of confirmed COVID-19 cases are Tested as part of an outbreak.

PCR and PCR-based Point Of Care tests for general asymptomatic patient testing should cease following a three week implementation period (from date of this letter).

PCR testing should continue for symptomatic patients.

An updated Hospital Patient Testing table will be published today, Monday 22 August 2022.

Weekly asymptomatic PCR staff testing in care homes

- Clinical advice is now that weekly asymptomatic testing in care homes can stop. Staff in care homes are the only staff group across health and social care still undertaking PCR testing. Staff can stop asymptomatic PCR testing as soon as it is practically possible in each care home. We recognise that a period of implementation may be needed given the number of care homes and the timetable of weekly testing across a seven day period i.e. it will not all stop on a given day.
- Current advice is that staff working in care homes should **continue** to test twice weekly with LFDs and record results on the NSS portal ([Welcome - COVID Testing Portal \(service-now.com\)](#))
- We are working with National Services Scotland (NSS) on the logistics of PCR testing. They have begun the process of reversing this and will be communicating with each care home in due course. Advice will also be issued on the residual stock of kits.

In line with our monthly review cycle, Scottish Government will be issuing further guidance on asymptomatic testing in September.

Extended use of face masks and face coverings guidance

The COVID-19: extended use of face masks and face coverings in hospitals, primary care and wider community healthcare guidance was reviewed by Scottish Government in July 2022. Based on the review it is recommended that the

guidance should remain in place throughout the winter period (2022/23). This recommendation was made in recognition that healthcare environments continue to care for more clinically vulnerable individuals, as well as current system pressures, current community prevalence of COVID-19, waning protection from the COVID-19 vaccine, the latest international practices, and in preparation for winter 2022/23 (with the possibility of increased transmission of COVID-19 and other winter respiratory viruses in circulation).

This continuation of this guidance is supported by both NSS Antimicrobial Resistance and Healthcare Associated Infection (ARHAI) and the COVID-19 Nosocomial Review Group (CNRG). The Coronavirus (COVID-19): extended use of face masks and face coverings in hospitals, primary care and wider community healthcare guidance wording has been updated to reflect the current situation and rationale, including a summation of the situations where a fluid resistant surgical mask (FRSM) is recommended.

Face Mask within adult social care settings

There remains separate guidance on face mask use for staff within [adult social care settings](#).

Derogating from guidance

If Health Boards move away from what is stated above with regards to testing, we would ask that you inform Scottish Government via the Chief Nursing Officer mailbox detailing what the current Board position is, how this move has been agreed and what review structures are in place.

Covid and Flu Vaccination – Autumn/Winter 2022

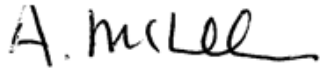
We would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Health and Social Care Sector of the important vaccination and the protection it offers staff and those they care for and support.

As you may be aware, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has issued advice for the Winter COVID-19 and flu programme recommending those most at risk, or those who come into regular contact with those most at risk, will soon become eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine dose to maximise their protection over winter. Where possible, this will be co-administered with the flu vaccine, which is a safe and effective way to deliver protection.

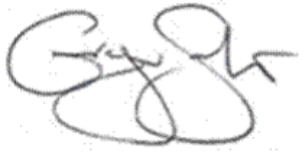
As of Monday 22 August, the booking portal will be available to frontline health and social care workers to book appointments for their COVID-19 and flu vaccines. Staff should book on the portal or follow advice from their boards on any local arrangements.

The following link has a suite of information and assets that your organisation may wish to use when advertising and encouraging staff to receive the vaccine. [Scottish Government Marketing News \(prgloo.com\)](https://www.scottish.gov.uk/marketing/news)

Yours sincerely



Professor Alex McMahon
Chief Nursing Officer



Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Chief Medical Officer