

20 March 2020: FAQs on using FFP 3 Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE)

<p>Why are the FFP3 respirators (masks) provided different to the usual ones we use?</p>	<p>Due to the sudden increase in demand to use FFP3 masks due to COVID-19, supply chain is using supplies put aside for pandemic flu. They offer the same level of protection but are a different design and model.</p>
<p>Why do the FFP3 masks have a different expiry date?</p>	<p>Some products may appear to have out-of-date 'use by/expiration' dates or have relabelled 'use by/expiration' dates. Please be assured products we are issuing have passed stringent tests that demonstrate they are safe. The PPE is exposed to extreme conditions for prolonged periods to see how the product deteriorates. Any that are not up to standard are destroyed and are not distributed to trusts.</p>
<p>Why do I need to be 'Fit tested' again?</p>	<p>The performance of tight-fitting facepieces depends on achieving a good contact between the wearer's skin and the face seal of the facepiece. Each model of FFP3 mask is slightly different in its fit to each individual face. The only way to ensure that it will protect you is to repeat the Fit test again with each model of mask provided. This process to fit check is required every time used</p>
<p>If I was 'Fit tested' to the make and model in 2009, do I need to do it again?</p>	<p>Provided your face shape has not changed since 2009 (weight changes, dental/facial surgery, facial moles/growths in seal area). It is possible that it may not be necessary. Do a Fit-check retest if in doubt!</p>
<p>What can I do if we are unable to meet demand for Fit Testing?</p>	<p>There is an expectation that teams will need to prioritise Fit-testing for staff groups working in high risk areas. In recognition of this challenge PHE have engaged the services of RPA (an independent Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) fit testing company), to offer free immediate support to trusts (England only) who are being asked to use FFP3 respirators that may not be their Business as Usual (BAU) respirator of choice. Booking on to these courses is via RPA's helpline on 07947 968972 and 07947 968922. This service will provide a helpline re training challenges and on-line training on how to run Fit Test Training.</p> <p>A local risk assessment will need to be completed. Follow the most recent Infection Prevention Guidance</p>
<p>We work in an area that is seeing many symptomatic patients and want to wear an FFP3 mask but do not have access to them?</p>	<p>FFP3 masks are only required when managing a patient/client with possible/confirmed COVID-19 who is undergoing an Aerosol generating Procedure (AGP) and when there are COVID-19 patients in High risk unit (ICU/ITU/HDU). The masks are only protective if you have been trained and tested in the correct method of application. If you are looking after this group of patients and there is a possibility that they have COVID-19 please escalate the need for urgent training through your emergency planning and response leads.</p>

<p>When should I use FFP3 masks?</p>	<p>FFP3 masks are only required when undertaking Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP). This is because the AGP process generates aerosols ($\leq 5\mu\text{m}$) which can result in exposure to aerosol viral particles. They should also be worn when you are caring for COVID-19 patients in a High-risk unit (ICU/ITU/HDU) because lots of aerosols will be generated.</p> <p>Definition of AGPs can be found in section 6 of Infection Prevention Guidance</p>
<p>How long can FFP3 masks be worn for?</p>	<p>FFP3 masks are tested to ensure they remain effective. Provided the seal remains intact, they can be worn comfortably for at least an hour but are effective for longer unless compromised, eg splashed with body fluids, damp with respiration. Please refer to the manufacturers' guidance for maximum duration. This means the masks, if in full working order and fitted properly, can be worn constantly for that period of time, while changing other PPE between patients and cleaning hands. If the mask is removed please dispose of as orange bag, (category B) waste, clean hands and change other PPE before reapplying new masks.</p>
<p>Do I need to wear a FFP3 when caring for a ventilated patient?</p>	<p>Yes, because although it's a closed circuit there is a risk of accidental disconnection of equipment. The circuit is also opened when patients are undergoing respiratory physio, being weaned or transported.</p>
<p>If caring for patients in a cohort do I need to change FFP3 masks between each patient like gloves and aprons?</p>	<p>If you are working in Intensive care/High dependency where several symptomatic patients are cohorted, the FFP3 masks can be used continually, provided the seal remains intact for at least an hour, please refer to manufacturers' guidance for maximum duration. Please ensure staff are adequately hydrated prior to applying the mask.</p>
<p>We are running short of FFP3 masks how are we to manage our patients safely?</p>	<p>Masks must only be used as directed and for staff providing direct care. Masks can be worn for prolonged periods (as above) and unlike gloves and apron, do not need to be changed between patients. If a member of staff does not need to go into the risk area, they should be kept out.</p>
<p>Why has the guidance changed to say we can use a fluid repellent surgical mask (FRSM) when caring for patients?</p>	<p>COVID-19 is transmitted through respiratory droplets, the evidence shows that in most cases when delivering direct care, a FRSM mask will provide adequate protection. Changing the current PPE guidance means that we will be able to ensure that the right equipment is used by the right person at the right time based on the transmission risk. Table 1 in the Section 6 of the Infection Prevention Guidance provides guidance of what PPE is required for each situation.</p>