

**Public Health & Infection Prevention & Control Guidelines
on the Prevention and Management of Cases and Outbreaks
of COVID-19, Influenza & other Respiratory Infections in
Residential Care Facilities**

V1.8 15.09.2022

For Implementation 26th of September 2022

Note: If you have any queries on this guidance please contact the AMRIC team at hcai.amrteam@hse.ie

Ver.	Date	Changes from previous version
1.8	15.09.22	<p>Testing of asymptomatic residents on transfer or admission is generally not required.</p> <p>General revision to focus on symptoms rather than on testing.</p> <p>IPC link practitioner role amended.</p> <p>Healthcare risk waste for facilities to be managed as per healthcare risk waste management guidance.</p> <p>Removal of term restricted movement as previously applied to contacts.</p> <p>Removal of appendix H- re serial testing.</p> <p>Addition of point of care risk assessment (Appendix H).</p> <p>Addition of How to use a point of care risk assessment (Appendix I).</p> <p>Rename Appendix I to Appendix J.</p> <p>General editorial revisions.</p> <p>Removal of earlier sections of this table of changes.</p>
1.7	01.07.22	<p>Inclusion of principles to support access and visiting to RCF, as the standalone guidance documents on access and visiting has been retired.</p>
1.6	02.06.22	<p>Removal of requirement for use of FFP2 respirator masks for all care.</p> <p>Recommendation that FFP2 respirator masks are used for care of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.</p>

on health workers' values and preferences and on their perception of what offers the highest protection possible to prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection. Note: this recommendation applies to any setting where care is provided to patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, including home care, long-term care facilities and community care settings.

- 2) A respirator should always be worn along with other PPE (see above) by health workers performing aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs)(2) and by health workers on duty in settings where AGPs are regularly performed on patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, such as intensive care units, semi-intensive care units or emergency departments. (Existing recommendation, with strength modified from conditional to strong, based on very low certainty evidence)*
- 3) Appropriate mask fitting should always be ensured (for respirators through initial fit testing and seal check and for medical masks through methods to reduce air leakage around the mask) as should compliance with appropriate use of PPE and other precautions.”*

https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-IPC_Masks-Health_Workers-Omicron_variant-2021.1

Recent experience in hospitals in Ireland also highlights particular concerns regarding spread of SARS-CoV-2 infection over longer distances from infectious patients supported by high flow oxygen devices (which is a recognised AGP) in particular in multi-bed areas.

3.3 Control of Transmission

Vaccination

Vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 (including booster vaccination) reduces the risk of transmission in addition to reducing severity of disease in those vaccinated. This serves to emphasise the importance of vaccination, including booster vaccination, of healthcare workers not only to protect themselves but also in protecting the people that they care for. Vaccination against influenza is also important for protection of the healthcare worker and the people they care for.

Standard Precautions

In addition to vaccination, Standard Precautions applied to all people cared for in all settings at all times plays a key role in managing the risk of infection for residents and for healthcare workers. For further information on Standard Precautions please see Interim Guidance on Infection Prevention and Control for the HSE V1.3 (2021). <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/hseinfectionpreventionandcontrolguidanceandframework/>

Note that in addition to Standard Precautions, healthcare workers are now advised to wear a respirator mask when caring for all residents with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Healthcare workers should use a surgical mask for care of those patients who are not suspected or confirmed of having COVID-19.

Transmission-based Precautions

Transmission-based Precautions are measures taken in addition to Standard Precautions to manage risk of transmission of infection when caring for people with known or suspected infectious disease for which Standard Precautions alone are not sufficient. Transmission-based Precautions include Contact, Droplet and Airborne Precautions. For details on Transmission-based precautions, please see the Interim Guidance on Infection Prevention and Control for the HSE (2021).

3.4 Vaccination

Vaccination for COVID-19 began in Ireland in late December 2020 with booster vaccination offered since the later part of 2021. The programme has been highly successful, with uptake of primary vaccination in adults at greater than 90%. The majority of residents and staff in RCFs have been vaccinated and have had booster vaccination.

Influenza vaccine is recommended to and offered to residents of RCFs and to all healthcare workers before winter each year.

Vaccine protection is not perfect and the vaccine may not work so well in people who have certain conditions or who are on a treatment that interferes with their immune system. Healthcare workers and residents are advised to continue to adhere to all IPC measures in