

# Wearing a face covering FAQs for patients

Updated 12 June 2020

From **Monday 15 June**, the Government requires all patients and visitors in NHS hospitals to wear a face covering. If you are coming to the RUH, please bring a face covering to wear while you are here.

We know that you might have some questions about this. Please read below to see whether your question has been answered. If not, please get in touch with the department you will be visiting before you arrive or call our Patients Advice and Liaison Service on 01225 825656 or 01225 826319.

## What is a face covering?

A face covering is a piece of cloth that covers your **mouth and nose** while allowing you to breathe comfortably. This does not have to be a surgical mask – it can be as simple as a scarf or a bandana that ties behind the head.

## Where can I get a face covering?

Public Health England has made a simple step-by-step guide for making your own face covering, using material like an old t-shirt or a piece of cotton fabric. [You can see this guide here.](#)

## What if I don't have a face covering?

Please support us by bringing a face covering. If you don't, you can collect one from our hygiene stations when you enter the hospital.

## **How do I put on and take off my face covering?**

You should wash your hands or sanitise your hands with alcohol gel before putting your face covering on or taking it off. When you take it off, you should avoid touching the front of the face covering.

To help with this, we will have hygiene stations at our entrances so you can sanitise your hands. We will also have bins available for you to dispose of your face covering when you leave, if you are wearing a disposable one. If your face covering is not disposable, you should make sure it is washed regularly, going in with your other laundry and using your normal detergent.

## **Why do I have to wear a face covering?**

The Government requires all patients and visitors in NHS hospitals to wear a face covering – this is a national policy to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus). The face covering acts as a barrier so that if you have the virus it helps reduce the spread to other people – you may have the virus despite not having any symptoms or only having very mild symptoms.

## **Do I still have to follow social distancing?**

Social distancing is still a really important part of keeping everyone safe. When you come to the RUH you will see lots of signs and stickers reminding everyone to keep a two metre distance – please follow these, and the guidance provided in departments and waiting rooms, even though people will be wearing face coverings.

## **Do children have to wear face coverings?**

We are not expecting babies and young children to wear face coverings, but adults accompanying them to hospital will need to.

## **Will staff be wearing face coverings?**

Staff already wear masks in clinical areas. From Monday 15 June, all NHS hospital staff will wear face masks.

## **How will people who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate?**

We recognise that face masks and face coverings have a huge impact on communication, and that this is particularly important for people who lip read.

To support this, please let staff know that you may need communication support. We have access to a British Sign Language interpreter service, and staff may also use written aids to make communication easier.



Unfortunately there are currently no medical grade face masks with clear panels available, but we are working to source some as soon as possible.

### **Does my face covering worn for religious beliefs/cultural practice qualify as a face covering?**

Yes, as long as the face covering is not loose and covers the nose and mouth.

### **What if I can't wear a face covering?**

We understand that there may be situations where you are unable to wear a face covering, such as if you are having breathing difficulties. You will not be required to wear a face covering if it compromises your care.

### **What if I don't want to wear a face covering?**

This is a national policy and will be the same at other hospitals across the country. We recognise that wearing a face covering may be uncomfortable and difficult, but we ask that you wear one to protect everyone's safety.

### **Does this mean I can come to hospital even if I have COVID-19 (coronavirus) symptoms?**

If you or someone in your household has symptoms, you should continue following the Government self-isolation guidance, and call 111 if further advice is needed. Wearing a face covering does not mean you can come to hospital for a routine appointment if you have symptoms.