

Key Update - Masks

Presently there is a global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE). The Australian Government has provided a limited supply of surgical masks to PHNs for distribution to general practices and community pharmacies with a demonstrated need.

PHNs do not have other PPE for distribution.

Who should wear masks?

To help conserve supply, we ask that practices and pharmacies use the masks only when needed. [Government guidelines](#) state that surgical masks are:

- For the protection of health professionals and practice/ pharmacy staff in direct contact with people presenting with fever and/ or respiratory symptoms including cough, sore throat and/ or shortness of breath
- For provision to people who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, for the protection of other patients and staff, and of the public while the patient returns home

There is no need for the general public or health workers to wear masks unless they are dealing with symptomatic patients.

PHN distribution guidelines

Generally, requesting providers **will be allocated one box (50 masks) per practice or community pharmacy.**

For routine primary care procedures, including specimen collection, surgical masks are considered to be effective. When specimen collection is undertaken they should be worn with other PPE as appropriate (gown, gloves and eye protection). P2/N95 respirators are only required for aerosol generating procedures or where there is uncontrolled coughing.

We ask that practices and pharmacies use masks sparingly and in accordance with guidelines. If we run out of masks, this will impact heavily on the ability of practices across our catchment to function properly.

Aged care providers that require Personal Protective Equipment must now email agedcarecovidppe@health.gov.au for all requests – please don't approach Primary Health Networks.

All requests will be triaged by the Department of Health with priority given to facilities, programs and workers where there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19.