Guidance on the use and types of face masks during COVID-19

This document outlines specific recommendations for the use and implementation of face masks to help reduce the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak on UNSW campuses and keep our UNSW community safe.

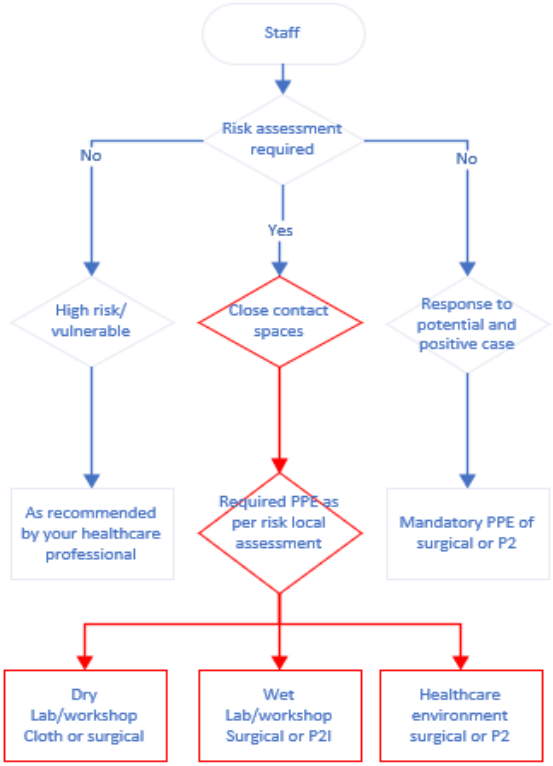
Where UNSW 'strongly recommends' the use of face masks, guidance has been developed in line with NSW Health recommendations.

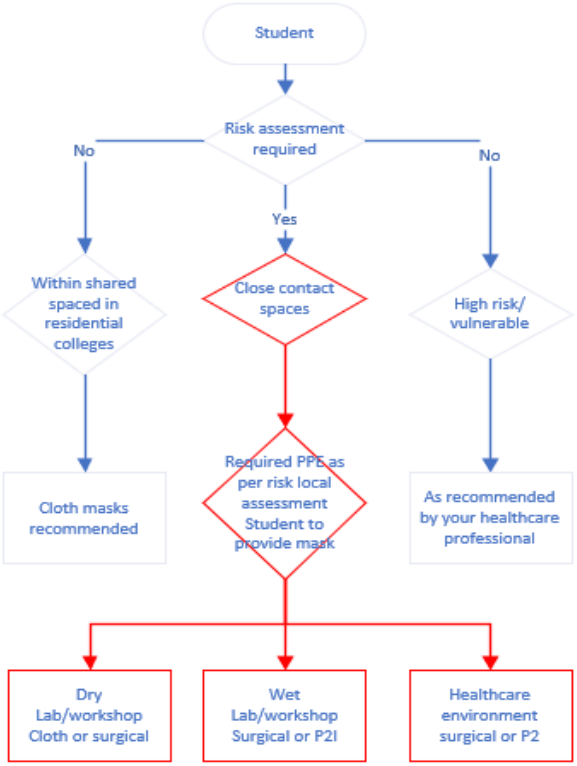
Face masks deemed required will be based on an assessment of the risk. In these circumstances, masks will be considered as necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and must be worn. The type of mask for such activities are outlined in Table 1 and Table 2.

The use of face masks is an extra precaution and not a substitute for the required hygiene and physical distancing measures outlined in the Safe Return to Campus Guidance. More information on face masks is also on the Health and Safety website.

When to conduct a Health and Safety Risk Assessment specifically for the consideration of masks as PPE.

The following flowcharts outline when a local Health and Safety Risk Assessment on the requirements for mask use must be conducted:





Where an activity is deemed close contact[1] a risk assessment must be carried out by the local area. This will assist in determining the mask type that will be deemed as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for that activity. For information on how to undertake a local risk assessment visit: https://safety.unsw.edu.au/risk-management-program

[1] *Definition: This means several times per day where the cumulative time of contact becomes > 15 minutes*

For further guidance on the types of close contact activities and recommended mask types see Table 1.

Table 1: Face mask types when it is required PPE.

Close contact activities	**Close contact activities**
Workers at retail outlets, food courts and service counters where there is close contact	Mandatory use of a three-layer cloth mask constructed to NSW Health specifications
Wet laboratory environments	Mandatory use of an L2 or L3 surgical mask. *(Cloth masks are not acceptable)*
Dry labs, workshops, clinics and teaching environments that cannot maintain physical distancing measures	Mandatory use of an L2 or L3 surgical mask *or cloth masks*
*H*ealth care related activities and those involved with members of the public or patients.	Mandatory use of an L2 or L3 surgical mask

There are some situations on campus where a face mask is not required PPE but where we strongly recommend a face mask is worn. Table 2 outlines these situations and the type of mask recommended.

Table 2: Masks type when it is deemed strongly recommended

Campus activities	**Close contact activities**
• Movement around campus – both indoors and outdoors - where it is difficult to maintain physical distancing. • Situations include but are not limited to: - Use of lifts - Busy corridors - Crowded entry and exits to classrooms - Short term visits to retail outlets, food courts and service counters where there is close contact - Travelling on the UNSW campus Shuttle Bus - Any other situation or activity where it might be difficult to maintain physical distancing. • Public transport - to and from campus and at all other times • Where the activity is in enclosed spaces and extends beyond two hours, irrespective of maintaining physical distance. Situations include but are not limited to: - Providing or receiving face-to-face advice or instruction - Teaching or demonstrations - Meetings in meeting rooms - Attending or working in an office-based environment	Personal provision of a three-layer cloth mask is strongly recommended
• Residential occupants and visitors using shared spaces within accommodation where physical distancing cannot be maintained	Use of a three-layer cloth mask *provided* is strongly recommended
• Vulnerable/High risk group persons: All activities where there is a requirement to be on campus	Personal provision of an appropriate mask as recommended by your health care professional is strongly recommended

The above outline of example activities, people and mask types should be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Risk Assessment: Implementation of face masks as PPE masks to reduce risk of COVID-19 on UNSW campuses. V1.1

Further Support

Contact your local WHS Business Partner/Coordinator for additional information and support.

Date last updated: 1st Oct 2020

Author: Safety and Wellbeing.
Version: 1.6