

## MEMORANDUM

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**DATE:** August 30, 2021

**TO:** Long-term Care and Assisted Living Managers and Directors of Care

**FROM:** Carmela Vezza, Director for Affiliated Sites and Strategy within the Long-term Care and Assisted Living Program  
Dr. Murray Fyfe, Medical Health Officer Island Health  
Emily Pridham, Director COVID Response

**RE:** Mask Update in Long-term Care and Assisted Living

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The COVID-19 situation continues to be closely monitored by our Medical Health Officers (MHO), Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC), Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S), and LTC/AL leadership.

With a recent increase in cases, masks for all staff in Long-term Care and Assisted Living must be reintroduced regardless of immunization status. **All staff must wear a medical-grade mask when in a facility and anywhere healthcare is provided. This includes hallways used to move between areas when healthcare is provided, as well as any other shared spaces such as breakrooms.** Masks may be removed temporarily when eating or drinking in breakrooms while also maintaining physical distance of 2 metres from others.

### Current Drivers for Change:

- Rising COVID-19 case numbers in Island Health impacting our Long-term Care and Assisted Living facilities
- In recent weeks, Delta has become the most common [COVID-19 variant](#) in the province, including on Vancouver Island
- The Delta strain spreads more easily between people and may lead to more serious outcomes than other strains of COVID-19
- All available means to limit the spread of new variants, including vaccination, wearing a medical-grade mask and following current IPAC and public health measures are necessary

### Need to know:

- This change is effective immediately
- This change is for all staff regardless of immunization status

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everyone, everywhere, every time.



- All protection measures (excellent hand hygiene, physical distancing where possible, active screening of all people entering and staying home when feeling unwell) still apply
- Additional PPE may be indicated based on [point of care risk assessment](#)
- Masks should be changed regularly, or if they get wet/soiled, at break times and/or after caring for residents who are on any additional precautions
- As before, medical-grade masks must be provided by the LTC/AL facility
- Mask use for visitors is currently under review and further communication will be forth coming

### **Resources and References:**

Ministry of Health Policy Communique June 18, 2021: [Mask use in Health Care Facilities During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

[Island Health PPE During COVID-19 Pandemic: Long-term Care](#) (last updated August 27, 2021)