

Dear Colleague

## **INFLUENZA A (H1N1): FIT TESTING OF FFP3 FACE MASKS FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF**

1. The majority of healthcare staff in contact with cases of influenza A(H1N1) would do so wearing a surgical face mask as part of their Standard / Droplet Infection Control Precautions in dealing with these patients. However, in the course of responding to the current influenza A (H1N1) situation, and in preparedness planning, there have been a number of enquiries received from colleagues regarding fit-test failures for FFP3 masks.

2. Staff who may be required to use FFP3 masks should be fit tested for the mask. If more than one make of mask is being used then the staff member requires to be fit tested for the various makes. Boards should liaise with the manufacturers of the masks they are using regarding fit testing and training. It is essential that those carrying out the fit testing closely follow the instructions as the main identified issues to date regarding fit testing and failures is that the instructions have not been fully adhered to

3. Colleagues from Health Protection Scotland have discussed some of the current known problems with mask fitting with 3M, the FFP3 manufacturer and as a result representatives of 3M have visited a number of NHS Boards. We understand that 3M have found that where there have been fit-test failures masks were not being donned properly. Additionally, when sensitivity tests were taken only 10 minutes before the actual fit-test, the sensitivity solution could still be tasted during the fit-test, and subsequently, recorded as a failure. 3M therefore advise leaving more time between completing sensitivity testing and fit-testing. Lindsay Cowan, Scottish sales rep for 3M has agreed that any Boards with queries regarding the 3M FFP3 masks can contact her to discuss. Lindsay can be contacted on 07747 764495.

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**From**

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**Addresses**

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For information  
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4. It is not necessary to dispose of masks after fit-testing. If a staff member has only used the mask for testing and they have not had patient contact, the mask can be re-bagged and the staff member can keep it for use when required

5. HPS are currently investigating whether similar issues have arisen with other FFP3 providers and manufacturers, but in the meantime, as detailed above, Boards should liaise with manufacturers if there are any issues around fit testing. HPS will continue to collate and investigate any issues related to masks (surgical or FFP3).

Yours sincerely

**Harry Burns**

**Dr Margaret McGuire**