

SESLHD POLICY COVER SHEET



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

NAME OF DOCUMENT	SESLHD workers and students unvaccinated for influenza must wear a mask while providing patient care in a high risk clinical area
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FUNCTIONAL GROUP(S)	Infection Control
KEY TERMS	Influenza, vaccination, mask, high risk category A, high risk clinical area.
SUMMARY	This policy outlines the mandatory use of a surgical/procedural mask by workers, unvaccinated for influenza while providing patient care in high risk clinical areas to protect yourself, those who work with you and patients during the influenza season.

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY
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SESLHD workers and students unvaccinated for influenza must wear a mask while providing patient care in a high risk clinical area

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

NSW Health has released a revised policy directive on health care worker screening and vaccination [PD2020_017 - Occupational Assessment Screening and Vaccination Against Specified Infectious Diseases](#) which continues mandatory vaccination and screening for certain diseases for workers employed in Category A positions and introduces a mandatory requirement for annual influenza vaccination of workers employed in Category A High Risk positions.

This policy also pertains to students who frequently come into contact with patients from Category A High risk areas.

2. PRINCIPLES

Annual influenza vaccination is highly recommended for all health care workers, staff employed in NSW Health facilities and students attending clinical placement. Vaccine preventable diseases can cause serious illnesses. NSW Health staff have a responsibility to do everything they can to minimise the risk of disease spreading to their patients.

In addition to complying with the requirements for Category A positions, all workers in a Category A High Risk position must also provide evidence of annual influenza vaccination by 1 June each year, or as notified by NSW Health.

Risk Categorisation Guidelines – [PD2020_017](#)

<p>CATEGORY A All positions must be categorised as Category A that involve either:</p>									
<p>1. Direct physical contact with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) patients/clients b) deceased persons, body parts c) blood, body substances, infectious material or surfaces or equipment that might contain these (e.g. soiled linen, surgical equipment, syringes); 	<p>OR</p> <p>2. Contact that would allow the acquisition or transmission of diseases that are spread by respiratory means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Workers with frequent/prolonged face-to-face contact with patients or clients e.g. interviewing or counselling individual clients or small groups; performing reception duties in an emergency/outpatients department; b) normal work location is in a clinical area such as a ward, emergency department, outpatient clinic (including, for example, ward clerks and patient transport officers); or who frequently throughout their working week are required to attend clinical areas, e.g. persons employed in food services who deliver meals and maintenance workers. 								
<p>CATEGORY A - HIGH RISK In addition to the requirements for workers employed in in Category A positions, workers employed in positions in the following high risk clinical areas must also receive the current southern hemisphere influenza vaccine (refer to Section 4 <i>Annual Influenza Vaccination Program</i>)</p>									
<p>High risk clinical areas*</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>1. Antenatal, perinatal and post-natal areas including labour wards and recovery rooms and antenatal outreach programs</td> <td>4. Transplant and oncology wards</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Neonatal intensive care units; special care units; any home visiting health service provided to neonates</td> <td>5. Intensive care units</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Paediatric intensive care units</td> <td>6. Multipurpose Services (NSW Health)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>7. NSW Health Residential aged care facilities (except when special provisions under 4.1 apply)</td> </tr> </table>		1. Antenatal, perinatal and post-natal areas including labour wards and recovery rooms and antenatal outreach programs	4. Transplant and oncology wards	2. Neonatal intensive care units; special care units; any home visiting health service provided to neonates	5. Intensive care units	3. Paediatric intensive care units	6. Multipurpose Services (NSW Health)		7. NSW Health Residential aged care facilities (except when special provisions under 4.1 apply)
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	7. NSW Health Residential aged care facilities (except when special provisions under 4.1 apply)								
<p>* Applies to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workers in associated community settings whose usual clients include infants, pregnant women, transplant or oncology patients. • workers that are required to work in a variety of areas or change location on a rotating basis who may be required to work in Category A High Risk areas • workers who are posted to or predominately work in Category A High Risk units 									
<p>CATEGORY B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does not work with the high risk client groups or in the high risk clinical areas listed above. 2. No direct physical contact with patients/clients, deceased persons, blood, body substances or infectious material or surfaces/equipment that might contain these. 3. Normal work location is not in a clinical area, e.g. persons employed in administrative positions not working in a ward environment, food services personnel in kitchens. 4. Only attends clinical areas infrequently and for short periods of time e.g. visits a ward occasionally on administrative duties; is a maintenance contractor undertaking work in a clinical area. 5. Incidental contact with patients no different to other visitors to a facility (e.g. in elevators, cafeteria, etc) 									

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3. TARGET AUDIENCE

All employees within the District.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

From 1 June annually, all Staff that enter high risk clinical areas and provide patient care within 1 metre of the patient, who have not received the appropriate influenza vaccination, will be required to wear a surgical/procedural mask while providing patient care in high risk clinical areas, for the full duration of the influenza season and complete the Acknowledgement Form – Appendix 1 or via Stafflink influenza consent form.

Why do unvaccinated workers have to wear a mask?

Wearing a mask, in conjunction with hand and respiratory hygiene, reduces the risk of influenza transmission. However, wearing a mask is still secondary to vaccination in terms of preventing the transmission of influenza.

To protect patients from influenza transmission, both vaccinated and unvaccinated staff members should consistently practice hand and respiratory hygiene and stay at home if they are experiencing influenza-like illness until symptom resolution.

Appropriate use of surgical/procedural masks

A single use mask must be worn by unvaccinated staff or students while providing patient care in high risk clinical areas.

A single use mask must:

- Be a Level 2 fluid resistant mask that has either ear loops or ties
- Be used for a single episode of patient care
- Be worn and fitted in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions
- Not be touched by hands while worn except for fitting e.g. around the nose and sides prior to exposure
- Cover the mouth, nose and chin while worn
- Not be worn loosely (both ties secured) or folded down around the neck.

A mask must be discarded once it has been worn, or becomes visibly soiled or moist and must not be used again. Removal is by touching the strings/ties or loops only followed by washing your hands.

Mask must be worn when providing clinical care or when within 1 metre of a patient.

Unvaccinated workers providing patient care in a Category A High Risk areas who refuse to wear a mask will be redeployed (if possible) or terminated.

Unvaccinated students who refuse to wear a mask will have their placement cancelled.

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5. DEFINITIONS

Category – the classification given to a position depending on the requirements of the role and as specified in Attachment 1 *Risk Categorisation Guidelines*.

The following categories are to be applied:

- **Category A** – direct physical contact with patients/clients, deceased persons, blood, body substances or infectious material or surfaces/equipment that might contain these or contact that would allow acquisition and/or transmission of a specified infectious disease by respiratory means.

- **Category A High-risk** – Category A workers who are employed in high risk clinical areas.

The high risk clinical areas are:

1. Antenatal, perinatal and postnatal areas including labour wards and recovery rooms and antenatal outreach programs
2. Neonatal intensive care units, special care units; any home visiting health service provided to neonates
3. Paediatric intensive care units
4. Transplant and oncology wards
5. Multipurpose services (NSW Health)
6. Intensive care units.

Workers that are required to work in a variety of areas or change locations on a rotating basis may be required to work in Category A High Risk clinical areas and will therefore be categorised as Category A High Risk and required to have a seasonal influenza vaccination each year.

- **Category B** – no direct physical contact with patients/clients, deceased persons, blood, body substances or infectious material or surfaces/equipment that might contain these and no greater risk of acquisition and/or transmission of a specified infectious disease than for the general community. Category B positions are not required to undergo assessment, screening and vaccination.

Contact – direct close interaction with patients/clients on an ongoing or short term basis.

Influenza season – From 1 June to 30 September, inclusive, unless another period is determined by the Chief Health Officer based on seasonal influenza epidemiology or the appearance of a novel influenza strain.

Patient Care – direct interaction with and within 1 metre of the patient.

Student – a person enrolled at a university, TAFE, secondary school or other education provider.

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Worker – any person employed by a NSW Health agency either on a permanent, temporary, casual or contract basis.

6. DOCUMENTATION

N/A

7. REFERENCES

[NSW Health Policy Directive PD2017_013 - Infection Prevention and Control Policy](#)

[NSW Health Policy Directive PD2020_017 - Occupational Assessment, Screening and Vaccination Against Specific Infectious Diseases](#)

[NSW Health Occupational Assessment Screening and Vaccination - FAQ](#)

8. REVISION AND APPROVAL HISTORY

Date	Revision No.	Author and Approval
4 June 2018	Draft	Joanne Newbury DDON TSH Kim Olesen LHD DNMS
June 2018	0	Processed by Executive Services prior to publishing.
June 2019	1	Minor review. Approved by Executive Sponsor. Processed by Executive Services prior to publishing.
July 2021	2	Minor review updated references
March 2022	3	Minor review to remove volunteers from policy. Volunteers will have their own policy. Hyperlinks updated. Approved by Executive Sponsor.

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Appendix 1

Acknowledgement by staff members and students unvaccinated against influenza of requirement to wear a mask when providing care to high-risk patients

NSW Health has released a revised policy directive on health care worker screening and vaccination, [NSW Ministry of Health Policy - PD2020_017 Occupational Assessment, Screening and Vaccination Against Specific Infectious Diseases](#), which introduces a mandatory requirement for annual influenza vaccination of Category A workers employed in high risk clinical areas.

The high risk clinical areas are defined as: Antenatal, perinatal and postnatal areas including labour wards and recovery rooms and antenatal outreach programs; Neonatal intensive care units, special care units; any outreach or home visiting health service provided to neonates (or to mothers of neonates); Adult and Paediatric intensive care units; Transplant and oncology wards.

Between 1 June and 30 September each year, all Category A staff and students working in High Risk areas who have not received the current influenza vaccination will be required to wear a surgical/procedural mask while providing patient care in high risk clinical areas to protect their patients, themselves and those who work with them.

SESLHDPD/307 provides information on the application of [NSW Ministry of Health Policy - PD2020_017 Occupational Assessment, Screening and Vaccination Against Specific Infectious Diseases](#) in SESLHD facilities.

Further information is available on the [NSW Health Occupational Assessment Screening and Vaccination - FAQ](#) page.

I have discussed the NSW Health and SESLHD policies with my manager or facilitator (for students), and understand and acknowledge that whilst I remain unvaccinated against influenza, I am required to wear a mask when providing clinical care or when within 1 metre of a patient in a high-risk clinical area within a SESLHD facility.

Name Stafflink number

Signature Date

Manager's/Facilitator's name

Manager's/Facilitator's signature

Date