



The Safety Bulletin has been created to provide ongoing direction to health care workers regarding the recommended safety guidelines, processes and personal protective equipment (PPE) supply. If you have any questions about PPE, Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) or safety as it relates to COVID-19 please call the OHS Hotline at 1-833-233-4403 or email OHS_Healthcareworkers_COVID19@saskhealthauthority.ca or infectioncontrol@saskhealthauthority.ca

Fit Testing to N95 Respirator - Update:

This following information is related to N95 Fit Testing only. Information on masking in SHA facilities after July 11 will be coming shortly.

As per EOC Directive, SHA will now be **fit testing any SHA staff or physician that ‘must attend an SHA or Affiliate facility for work’**. This means that **if there is no option for the worker to perform the core functions of their role from home or outside an SHA or Affiliate facility/home** they will be required to be fit tested to an N95 respirator.

In order to be successful in this initiative we are asking that SHA leaders and health care workers (HCW) are asked to prioritize this work.

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to create a provincial fit testing strategy were put on hold and resources shifted to quickly and efficiently fit test priority staff and physicians who were identified as requiring an N95 respirator for [Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures \(AGMPs\)](#).

Respirators in the context of COVID-19 continue to only be needed for AGMPs. Fit Testing for priority groups have largely been completed and resources can now focus on fit testing other SHA staff and physicians to meet our legislative requirements.

According to the Occupational Health & Safety Regulations (OH&S), 1996, it is the Saskatchewan Health Authority’s (SHA) responsibility to ensure that the worker (and contractor) use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and that PPE is maintained and fits appropriately to protect the worker from hazards.

Why are we expanding Fit Testing?

The decision and rationale to Fit Test any staff and physician who **must attend an SHA or Affiliate facility for work** is as follows:

1. **The risk to the SHA is HIGH:**
 - 50% of staff and physicians are not Fit Tested impacting all levels of its health care delivery should there be an immediate need to don a respirator.
2. **Vaccinations** – reduce the severity of the symptoms, however, **do not eliminate the risk** of contracting or spreading the virus.
3. **Variants of Concern (VOC)** – are still an unknown entity. We need to be actively prepared to address the potential risk of VOC’s requiring a respirator in the future.
4. **Proactive approach** – is less costly, time consuming, and meets our regulation requirements.
5. **Timeframe:** In most cases a Fit Test is valid for a period of 2 years, giving the organization time to re-evaluate the need to maintain Fit Testing status based on new or potential hazards.

Who is included?

Any staff and physicians **who must be physically present in an SHA or Affiliate to perform their role.** The majority of those not fit tested are:





- facility/maintenance
- security
- unit support workers
- porters
- health information
- lab services
- environmental services
- nutrition/food services
- social workers
- technicians
- therapies

Many corporate services (Finance, Digital Health, Communications, Human Resources, etc.) are primarily working from home and may not be required to attend an SHA or Affiliate facility to perform their core work functions. If this describes your position you do not need to be Fit Tested at this time.

Please contact your local OHS departments if you want to make a request to change your Fit Testing appointment.

Frequently Asked Questions:

I have received two doses of the vaccine, why would I need to wear an N95 if the VOC becomes increasingly transmissible?

The role of vaccination is to reduce your risk of severe illness if you are infected with COVID-19. The role of an N95 mask is to reduce your risk of getting infected with COVID-19 if you are exposed during an [Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures \(AGMP\)](#). A combination of the two is very powerful in protecting you and by extension your patients, coworkers and family.

I work mostly from home, do I need to come in and be Fit Tested?

No, not at this time. The SHA is focusing their efforts to Fit Test staff and physicians who must be physically present in an SHA or Affiliate to perform their role.

Why didn't I get Fit Tested last year? Why now?

Efforts to create a provincial Fit Testing strategy were put on hold and resources shifted to quickly and efficiently Fit Test priority staff and physicians who were identified as requiring an N95 respirator for [AGMPs](#). Fit Testing efforts were focused on this group at that time to ensure SHA was appropriately directing resources and conserving N95 respirator supply.

My Manager completed a JSA/Hazard Assessment (Job Safety Analysis) and a respirator was not identified as being a requirement. Do I still need to be Fit Tested?

Yes. A job safety analysis (JSA) is a procedure which helps integrate accepted safety and health principles and practices into a particular task or job operation. In a JSA, each basic step of the job is to identify potential hazards and to recommend the safest way to do the job. Other terms used to describe this procedure are job hazard analysis (JHA) and job hazard breakdown.

As the SHA has identified VOCs a potential risk requiring a respirator; the need to be Fit Tested stands.

I am scheduled for Fit Testing with Saskatchewan Association for Safe Workplaces in Health (SASWH) and I am to attend clean shaven. What does 'clean shaven' mean as compared to the SHA Facial Hair Policy Directive?

The SASWH's policy is to only Fit Test individuals who are completely clean shaven, meaning no facial hair at all. In comparison, the SHA's Facial Hair Policy Directive permits facial hair in areas that do not interfere (growing or protruding into) with the respirator seal or function. Please see the [SHA Facial Hair Policy Directive](#) for further information.

