

As we approach winter case of Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) such as Covid-19 and Influenza and other cold/viral illnesses are starting to increase. Respiratory infections spread easily between people, and it is important to be aware of actions that can be taken to reduce the transmission of infection. NHS Somerset ICB have devised a mask RAG rating tool which can be referred to and guide you when making decisions for your organisation to try to reduce the negative impact resulting from the increase in ARI and other viral illnesses which can spread very easily within healthcare environments.

This tool is for guidance to assist you when making decision regarding the mask wearing and other measures to minimise the spread of respiratory based infections. This tool does not advise which mask should be utilised as NHS Somerset will advise that a risk assessment is performed taking into consideration the individual, task, training etc. Further clarification and guidance regarding specific masks can be found in the table under the guidance section.

There are many reasons for exceptions to mask wearing and we would advise that all colleagues, visitors, and patients are sensitive to others needs when implementing any change within your organisation and continue to actively support those who cannot wear a mask or where a mask would hamper any individual and if required explore other mitigations such as visors, clear face masks etc.

**Other actions to help mitigate the spread of ARI:**

Hand Hygiene

Ventilation

Decontamination

Social Distancing

Face coverings



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|  | Criteria | Guidance |
| **Green** | * Low transmission across the county
* Minimal outbreaks within Primary and Secondary Care
* Minimal admissions due to Acute Respiratory Infections i.e. Covid/flu to Secondary Care
 | Follow National Guidance when assessing patients presenting with symptoms of Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) - [C1657\_next-steps-on-infection-prevention-and-control-letter\_010622.pdf (england.nhs.uk)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/C1657_next-steps-on-infection-prevention-and-control-letter_010622.pdf)[NHS England » National infection prevention and control](https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-infection-prevention-and-control/)[COVID-19: information and advice for health and care professionals - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-information-and-advice-for-health-and-care-professionals) |
| **Amber** | * Transmission rates increasing across the county
* Increase in admissions to Secondary Care due to Acute Respiratory Infections

 * Outbreaks being reported across Primary and Secondary Care
 | Follow National Guidance when assessing patients presenting with symptoms of ARI -see above links**Consider introducing: -*** Fluid repellent surgical masks (FRSM) for all staff in patient facing areas including those staff whose workspace is shared with patient waiting areas
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| **Red** | * High transmission rates across Somerset

 * Significant admissions due to Acute Respiratory Infections to Secondary Care

 * Multiple outbreaks across Primary and Secondary Care settings
* Significant admissions due to Acute Respiratory Infections to critical care
 | Follow National Guidance when assessing patients presenting with symptoms of ARI -see above links  **Consider introducing: -*** FRSM for all staff across the surgery/practice.
* Face coverings for all individuals attending the organisation.
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