

Helping you to prevent skin damage under respirator masks



Wearing a respirator mask can cause facial skin damage. This may be due to moisture (such as sweat) or friction if the mask isn't fitted properly or tensioned correctly. A few simple steps will help prevent damage.

Prepare your skin before putting your mask on

- Cleanse and apply a moisturising cream at least 30 minutes before applying mask.
- Avoid make-up - it increases the risk of mask slippage/friction.
- Stay well hydrated - for more information see the advice produced by the British Dietetic Association at www.pha.site/keephydrated

Fit your mask carefully and take breaks from wearing it

- Take time to fit your mask properly.
- Pay attention to areas around aids, such as glasses or hearing aids.
- Limit mask wear time - we recommend taking a break after 2 hours, if possible.
- If your mask is uncomfortable remove it, following IPC guidance, and allow skin to recover for around 5 minutes. When returning to care, apply a clean mask and carry out a fit check.



Barrier products can be helpful but choose the right one

- Consider use of a barrier skin wipe/skin protectant, if you are likely to be wearing the mask for extended periods.
- Check for allergies before applying any products onto skin.
- Do not apply near the eyes, eyelids or mouth.
- Allow 90 seconds to dry.
- Do not use film sprays as these may go into your eyes or mouth and cause harm.
- Do not apply dressings or tape under your mask as these can break the seal. These can only be worn if your mask was fit tested with these in situ – speak to a TVN who will supply an appropriate dressing for your test.

Seek help if problems occur

If you develop blisters, pustules or an open wound, seek advice from the Tissue Viability Nurse (TVN) Team in your local Trust. The TVN Teams have worked with dermatology and pharmacy colleagues as well as senior nurses and now have a process in place which will allow you to be treated on site.

Inform your line manager and complete an incident report detailing the type of mask and the batch number. You may need to consider the use of an alternative mask or a hood.

You can contact your local TVN team on:

Belfast HSCT	078 4180 9054	South Eastern HSCT	028 9598 8000
Northern HSCT	028 7936 6728	Western HSCT	028 7134 5171
Southern HSCT	077 9903 8108		ext 214499