



8th June 2020

GMB ADVICE: FIT TESTING COVID-19

What is fit testing?

FFP3 Face Masks must only be used by staff who have been fit tested for the mask they are using. Staff must complete a fit check every time they are required to wear a new / different mask.

Powered respirator checks must be performed before each use, in accordance with the trust instructions, including a battery check.

Why is it important?

An inadequate fit can reduce the protection provided and lead to immediate or long-term ill-health or can even put the wearer's life in danger.

A fit test should be repeated whenever there is a change to the mask type, size, model or material or whenever there is a change to the circumstances of the wearer that could alter the fit, for example:

- Weight loss or gain.
- Substantial dental work.
- Any facial changes (scars, moles, effects of ageing etc) around the face seal area.
- Facial piercings.
- Introduction or change in other head-worn PPE.

What are the sessional and re-use requirements in hospital settings?

Public Health England (PHE) issued guidance states:

- **Fluid Repellent Surgical Face Masks (FRSM) and disposable respirators (FFP3/FFP2/N95):**

Sessional use is dependent on individual factors such as heat, activity and can be between 2-6 hours. They must be disposed of if damaged or moist. They can be reused providing they are not damaged, soiled or hard to breathe through. Masks with elastic ear hooks are more appropriate to be reused than those that are tie on.

Face masks should be carefully folded so the outer surface is held inwards and should be stored in a clean sealable bag / box marked with the person's name.

Fit checks should be performed each time a respirator is donned if it is reused.

The GMB position on this is that although FFP3 masks are effective for longer periods of time, the general recommendation would be to wear the FFP3 face masks for up to 3 hours. However, the duration of wear is dependent on the outcome of a dynamic risk assessment conducted by the staff member taking into consideration a number of factors such as the environment, personal comfort or tolerance and the activity or task that is being undertaken.

What should you do if you fail the fit test?

The fit-tester should ask you to re-fit the face piece and repeat the fit-test. If a better fit is not obtained you may be asked to try on a different size or type of face piece and repeat the fit-test. You may also wear a respirator which would be provided by the employer.

You should not use a face piece that does not fit you properly. The fit-tester should inform your employer. Your employer should ensure that you are provided with a face piece that fits you properly.

There isn't any UK guidance that says 'what to do if you fail the tests.' There is just a requirement to keep testing.

GMB's position is that - you should not work frontline until you have a mask that is fitted properly. Alternative working options should be considered until this can be achieved, with no financial detriment and with the involvement of your trade union representative if required.

If you believe you have been put at risk of contracting Coronavirus at work, please complete the GMB Covid-19 Risk Register at <https://www.gmb.org.uk/covid-19-risk-register>

If you have any concerns regarding fit testing, please contact your local GMB Representative for advice and support.

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