

# COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

## Roll out of PFRs in quarantine pathway

These frequently asked questions relate to the implementation and roll out of Particulate Filter Respirators (PFRs) for staff working in red/orange zones at medi-hotels and red zones at Adelaide Airport.

This advice is based on the Australian Government [Guidance on the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) for health care workers in the context of COVID-19](#) and the [SA Health Respiratory Protection Against Airborne Infectious Diseases Clinical Guideline](#), and applies to all people working in non-clinical and clinical settings.

### What is a PFR?

A Particulate Filter Respirator or PFR (such as P2 or N95) is a type of mask that protects the wearer from exposure to small airborne particles or aerosols. They are used when there is a high probability of transmission from particles, droplets or aerosols in the air.

PFR masks have a close fit and seal to the face and provide greater protection than surgical masks, which are looser fitting.

### Why are PFRs being introduced to quarantine pathway workers?

There is emerging evidence that new variants of COVID-19 show increased transmissibility, which means it is easier to catch or spread the virus. There is also evidence of the potential risk of airborne transmission, including via small aerosol particles that can be inhaled into the lungs.

In response to this new evidence, a review of PPE processes has been conducted to ensure everyone working in potentially higher risk zones at the airport and medi-hotels are appropriately protected. The use of PFRs, in addition to other items of recommended PPE, is being introduced to mitigate these risks.

### When are PFRs being introduced?

The use of PFR masks by staff has already begun at Adelaide Airport and some medi-hotel sites. PFR masks will be introduced across the quarantine pathway system in a phased six week roll out.

### Who does this apply to?

The use of PFR masks will be rolled out to all people working in the designated airport red zones and medi-hotel orange and red zones. Staff will need to be fit tested, and must fit check their PFR every time it is put on to ensure the recommended mask is put on correctly.

### Do heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractors need to wear PFRs?

Yes. Maintenance workers and mechanical contractors must wear PFRs at all times whenever working on the HVAC systems due to the risk of viable virus on air conditioning filters.

### What kind of PFR can I use?

You will be trained in how to perform a **fit check** and also be **fit tested** to a specific make and model of the PFR mask to suit your face. You must use the PFR that you have been fit check trained and fit tested to, as different PFRs fit differently and may not suit your face or provide an adequate seal.

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### What do I need to do to start using a PFR?

For PFRs to be effective, a tight facial seal is required. In order to ensure the tight seal is achieved, it is essential that the wearer is properly fitted and trained in its safe use.

Before you use a PFR, you must attend fit check training (30 minute group training). This is in addition to other practical PPE training.

Fit testing is the gold standard for PFR use and should be attended as soon as possible. More information on the delivery of fit testing will be provided soon.

In situations where it is recommended a PFR is used, but a fit test has not yet happened, a fit checked PFR is preferred instead of a surgical mask.

### What is fit check training?

You must undertake fit check training before you can begin using a PFR, as it is important that you know how to put on and take off a PFR safely and correctly. This is 30 minute group training.

Once you have attended fit check training, you must perform a fit check each time a PFR is used to make sure the PFR is properly applied. This includes ensuring there is a good seal over the bridge of the nose and mouth and there are no gaps between the PFR and the face.

### What is fit testing?

Fit testing is a validated method that determines the brand and size of respirator most suited to the individual's face. Fit testing requires an approximately 20 minute individual appointment that measures the effectiveness of the seal between the PFR and the face using a specialised machine. All staff who wear a PFR must eventually be fit tested, as well as trained in fit checking.

Following fit testing, you must use the specific make and model of PFR that was tested in your fit testing appointment. This may differ to what you used in fit check training education sessions.

### How do I access fit check training and get fit tested?

SA Health is working with agencies and organisations on the delivery of fit check training and fit testing.

Fit check training is currently being provided by COVID Operations Infection Control Service staff.

Fit testing is currently provided by SA Health Worker Health and Safety based on a risk assessment and ongoing work is happening to expand fit testing capacity.

### Why does facial hair, piercings and make-up matter?

It is important not to compromise the seal between the PFR and the skin of the face, as per the Australian/New Zealand Standard.

Facial hair present between the edges of the PFR mask and the skin of the face must be removed. Beards, large moustaches, side burns and short stubble can interfere with the seal of the mask and its ability to provide protection. People must not have facial hair on the cheeks, jaw and neck to ensure an adequate seal.

You may attend the face-to-face fit check training with facial hair, however, you may not be able to be fully assessed for fit checking and PFR usage. Fit testing may also be compromised.

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It is also important that long hair is tied back so that it does not interfere with the PFR seal and the safe use of the PFR.

Other factors that may interfere with safe use of PFRs can include the wearing of jewellery (ear and facial piercings) as well as some make-up, which will be considered at the time of fit testing.

### What if I can't remove facial hair or piercings?

In instances where facial hair and piercings cannot be removed and are deemed to interfere with the fit and seal of the PFR, agencies and organisations must undertake a risk assessment to determine options in accordance with work health and safety. This may include alternate tasking outside of the red or orange zone or other lower risk tasking.

### Am I still required to wear other types of PPE?

Yes. The use of PPE is essential in reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. PPE items including gowns, gloves and eye protection must be worn in addition to the PFR mask as required.

Please note: If a face shield is worn outside in windy conditions which may cause dislodgement of the face shield, additional protective eye wear (eg goggles/safety glasses) should also be worn in addition to the face shield. Alternatively protective eye wear (eg goggles/safety glasses) can be worn instead of a face shield.

### Who can I speak to if I have any questions?

If you have concerns about the PFR roll out, you should discuss with your line manager in the first instance.

For fit check education and training queries, contact the SA Health COVID Operations Infection Control Service at [Health.COVIDInfectionControlService@sa.gov.au](mailto:Health.COVIDInfectionControlService@sa.gov.au).

For fit testing queries or to book in for fit testing, please speak with your line manager.

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## For more information

[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID-19](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID-19)