

# COVID-19 Notice

Friday 03 April 2020



## FIT TESTING

**(JOINTLY ISSUED ON BEHALF OF NIAS MANAGEMENT & TRADE UNIONS)**

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust and recognised Trade Unions have issued the following partnership statement.

We are in unprecedented times and COVID-19 pandemic presents a significant and escalating risk to the health of our service users as well as to each of us within NIAS, our families and our social contacts. It is therefore vital that we all play our part in minimising onward spread of the virus to keep our families, our patients, those vulnerable persons, who form part of our communities, and ourselves as safe as possible from suffering the effects of the virus. In order to achieve this, adherence to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures is critical.

In the context of WHO designating COVID-19 as a pandemic, and the unprecedented situation that we face, we would wish to remind you of your responsibilities in relation to PPE, specifically in relation to fit testing.

You must take all appropriate measures to ensure the secure and successful completion of fit testing to face masks. This includes removal of any facial hair or heavy make-up that affects the seal of the mask for (1) when you attend to have a fit test and (2) for every time you may be required to wear a mask. If you believe this presents any difficulty for you, based on religious or cultural factors, you should make immediate contact with your line manager. Consideration of possible alternatives will be given, on a case-by-case basis, which may include the use of a hood. Please note, however that currently we only have a very small number of hoods, as an alternative to face masks, due to global demand.

We would also wish to reinforce your requirement to adhere strictly to IPC principles:-

- *Hands must be visibly clean at all times.*
- *Fingernails must be kept clean and kept at a length that will not damage medical examination gloves or risk causing injury to a patient or equipment. Nail polish is not permitted. False nails including gels, overlays and acrylics, are not permitted. Nail jewellery is not permitted.*
- *Cuts, grazes and abrasions must be covered with a plaster/bandage.*
- *Hair must be clean and tidy at all times. Hair that falls below the collar must be secured/tied back. Hairstyles must not impede the effective use of Trust PPE.*

We request that all staff comply with this directive in order to afford maximum protection available to colleagues, service users, ourselves, our families and social circle.

**Sent on behalf of**  
**MICHELLE LEMON,**  
**INTERIM DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES**  
**NIAS TRADE UNION BRANCH SECRETARIES**