

PATIENT INFORMATION

Face Mask Wearer, Information for the

What is a Fit Test?

The health and safety executive state that any tight-fitting respirators (such as disposable FFP3 masks and reusable half masks) rely on having a good seal with the wearer's face. A face fit test should be carried out to ensure the respiratory protective equipment (RPE) can protect the wearer. A fit test should be carried out before people wear RPE for the first time. An inadequate fit can reduce the protection provided and lead to immediate or long-term ill-health, or can even put the RPE wearer's life in danger.

The person carrying out the fit test will explain to you what a fit test is and why it is carried out.

What will be required from me when I have a Fit Test?

Depending on the fit test method used, you may be asked to refrain from smoking, including vape, drinking (except water) or eating for at least 60 minutes prior to the fit test.

A fit test should not be conducted if you have any facial hair growth in the area where the face piece seal meets your face. This is because a reliable face seal can only be achieved if you are clean-shaven in the area where the face piece seal touches your face. You will, therefore, be asked to be suitably clean-shaven for the fit test. **You should remember that the same rule applies when you wear your face piece on a day-to-day basis at work.** If you are unable to be suitably clean-shaven for an unavoidable reason (e.g. where a beard is worn for religious reasons), then your employer should provide you with a suitable loose fitting face piece that does not require you to be clean-shaven or make alternative arrangements so that the risk to your health is either prevented or adequately controlled. Care should be taken to ensure that any facial hair within the face piece does not interfere with the proper functioning of the face piece components such as exhalation valves. Loose fitting face pieces do not require fit testing described in this document. If you wear spectacles with side arms, you will not be able to wear a tight-fitting full face mask. In this circumstance your employer should provide you with a suitable loose fitting device.

You should be able to fit the face piece in the manner in which you have been trained and without assistance from the fit tester. You should know how to carry out a pre-use fit check of the face piece.

During the fit test you will be asked to perform simple exercises. The person conducting the fit test should explain the reasons for carrying out these exercises. If you have any medical condition that may prevent you from performing these exercises, then you should bring this to the attention of the fit tester and your employer.

If you normally wear protective goggles or hard hat etc. when you wear your face piece you may be asked to wear these also during the fit test.

Can I be fit tested in the face piece I usually wear?

The fit test will be carried out using the make and brand of the face piece you normally wear. If you are to be fit tested in your own face piece then you should make sure that the face piece is clean and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instruction. Note: it is not the job of the fit test provider. They have been advised by the HSE not to carry out a fit testing on a face piece that is not maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

What if I normally wear more than one type of respirator?

If you need to wear more than one type of tight-fitting face piece for your job e.g. a filtering face piece and a full face mask respirator, then you should be fit tested for each type of face piece.

What will I be told at the end of the fit test?

When you have completed the fit test you will be told if you have obtained a pass or a fail. A pass means that the face piece is suitable for you. You can ask for a copy of the fit test report from your manager. You will be given a slip of paper to confirm which face piece you have been fitted on. A failed fit test may indicate that the face piece does not fit you properly.

What will happen if I fail a fit test?

The fit tester should ask you to refit 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 should not use a face piece that does not fit you properly.*** The fit tester will document on the database any results and you should inform your manager. Your manager should ensure that you are provided with a face piece that fits you properly.

How often should I have a fit test?

You may need to change to another type of face piece if; you lose or gain weight that you feel affects the fit of your mask; you undergo any substantial dental work or develop facial imperfections (scars, moles, etc) around the face seal area.

Will I be able to move departments/area of work without having to have another fit test?

If you change your department/area of work but still continue to wear the same face piece or same face piece model and size you should not have to be retested.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.