

# COVID-19 Mask Extender Survey Results

## Background

Since continuous masking began in April, many AHS staff started to wear mask extenders or 'ear savers' to relieve the constant pressure on their ears.

The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Task Force conducted an online survey to gather more information about the styles, preferences and use of different mask extenders. Open from April 29 to May 8, 2020, the survey received over 3 500 staff responses.

## Results

- From the responses, we learned that mask extenders are widely used across all zones and roles, including nursing, allied health, support services and management.
- Most respondents (84%) have received their mask extenders free of charge, either homemade or donated by companies in Alberta.
- Mask extenders styles are made from a range of materials and methods:
  - 60% are made of plastic, many manufactured with 3D printers.
  - 18% are hand-made knitted or crocheted styles.
  - 15% are made of cloth, such as a head band or cap with buttons.
  - 5% have used unique solutions like a paper clip or a ponytail to hook the elastics, or have used one of the barrel of monkeys.
- Mask extenders are generally easy to use, fit well, and provide comfort.
- Only 7% of respondents reported concerns with the ease of taking off their mask when using an extender. 7% also expressed concerns with self-contamination when putting on or removing the mask and extender.
- More than 90% of respondents reuse their extenders and clean or disinfect them. Some respondents wearing cloth or knitted/crocheted styles were not sure of the best method for disinfection.

## Next steps

The PPE Task Force will be conducting a small pilot with staff to review the most commonly used mask extenders. The findings of this pilot will be shared on the [PPE page](#).

In the meantime, please review the recently developed [Guidelines for Continuous Masking in Healthcare Settings](#) and refer to [AHS resources about PPE](#).

**If you have questions or comments about the survey results, please email: [ppe@ahs.ca](mailto:ppe@ahs.ca)**