

# COVID-19 Service Reintroduction Update

August 13, 2020

Over the past 10 weeks Nova Scotia Health has made tremendous progress completing and rebooking surgeries, exams and procedures that were impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This update provides information on our efforts to increase access to surgery, endoscopy, diagnostic imaging services, outpatient laboratory services and other outpatient services.

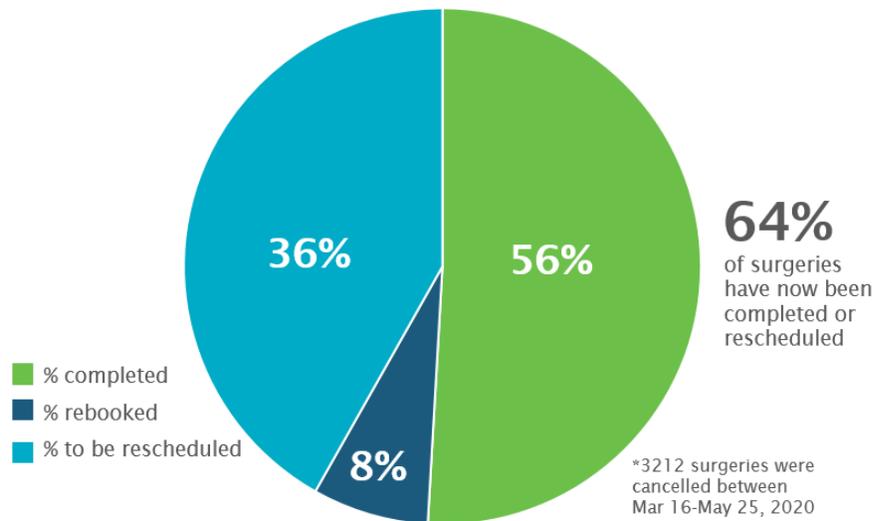
## Surgery and Endoscopy

Urgent, emergency and time-sensitive cancer surgeries and procedures continued to be offered during COVID-19, however a total of 3213 scheduled surgeries were postponed during this slowdown.

Many other surgeries and endoscopy procedures did not occur during this time.

Our efforts to date demonstrate progress to reach our normal service levels and make up the surgeries and other procedures that were not completed as a result of the pandemic.

Progress Completing/Rebooking Surgeries Cancelled During COVID-19 Slowdown\* (Updated August 1, 2020)



Data reflects progress rebooking/completing scheduled surgeries that were postponed. Many other surgeries would normally have taken place during this time, but had not yet been scheduled when COVID-19 measures were put into place. Total numbers may fluctuate between reporting periods due to ongoing data quality efforts. Data excludes endoscopy procedures.

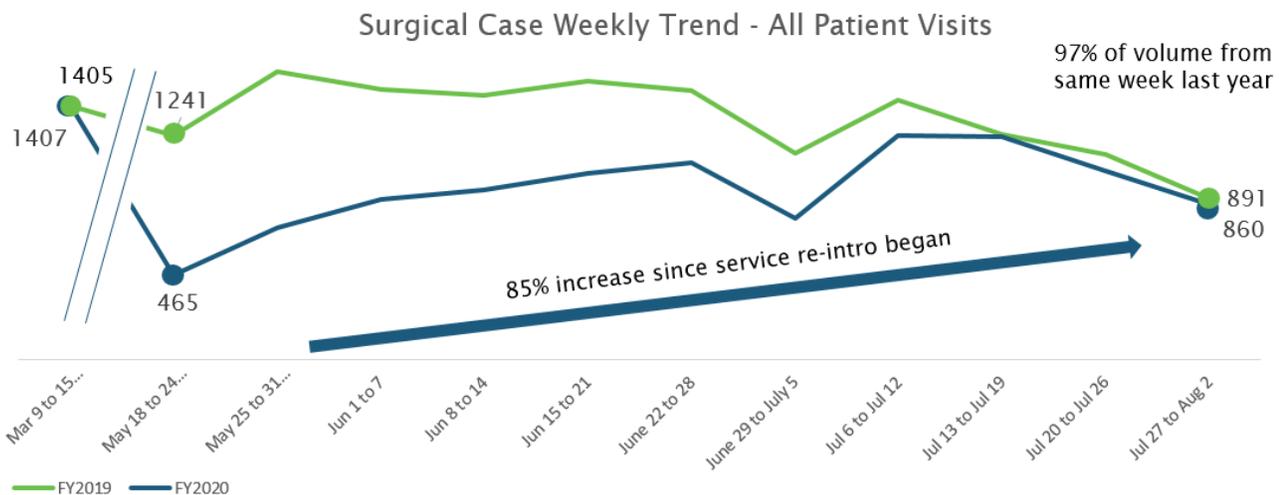
## Increasing Surgeries

Our surgical teams are working to prioritize cases and increase our capacity so that as many patients as possible can get the surgery they need. We have made adjustments to how we deliver and schedule services to allow for more surgery, while maintaining COVID-19 precautions.

More information for surgery patients can be found [here](#).

## Surgical Volumes

- May 18–24 (before service increase), 461 surgeries (37% of cases same week in 2019).
- As of August 2, surgeries were up 85% from the week before service reintroduction began.
- As of August 2, volumes were at 860 (97% of 2019 volume for same week).

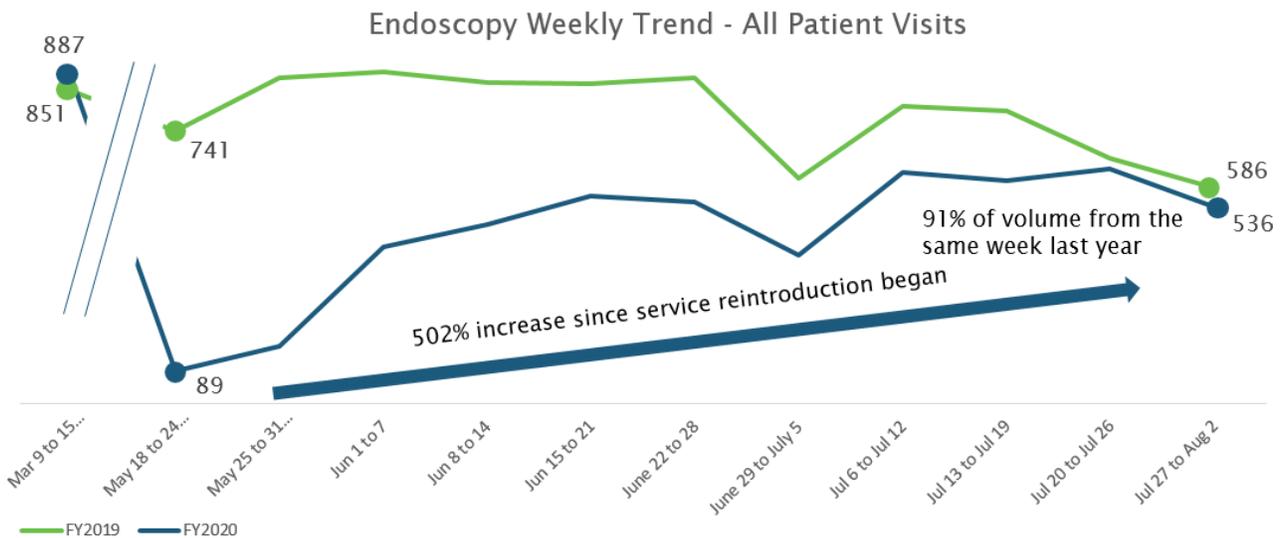


## Increasing Endoscopies

Access to endoscopy services across our various sites has increased significantly.

### Endoscopy Volumes

- May 18–24 (before service increase), 89 endoscopies were completed (12% of cases same week in 2019).
- July 27–Aug 2, 536 endoscopies completed (91% of cases the same week in 2019), an **increase of 502%** since service reintroduction began.



## Diagnostic Imaging (DI) Exams

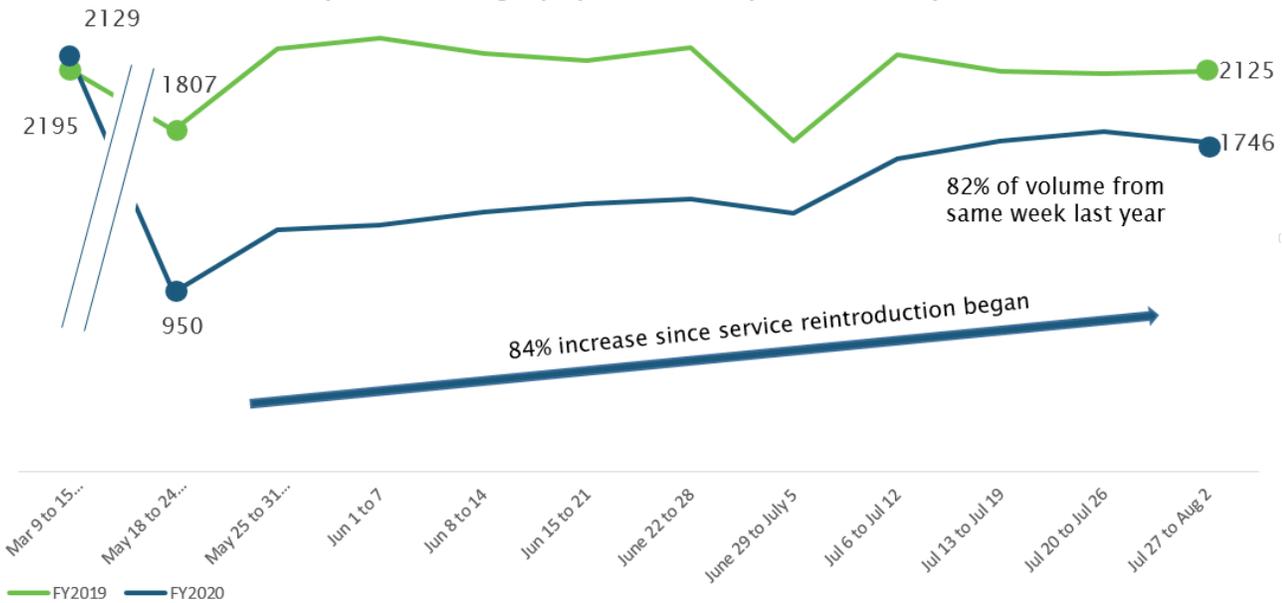
This update provides information related to computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and ultrasound (US) exams, completed on an outpatient basis.

Currently, all emergency and urgent exams are being performed and work continues to complete semi-urgent exams. Only limited numbers of elective exams are being performed at this time.

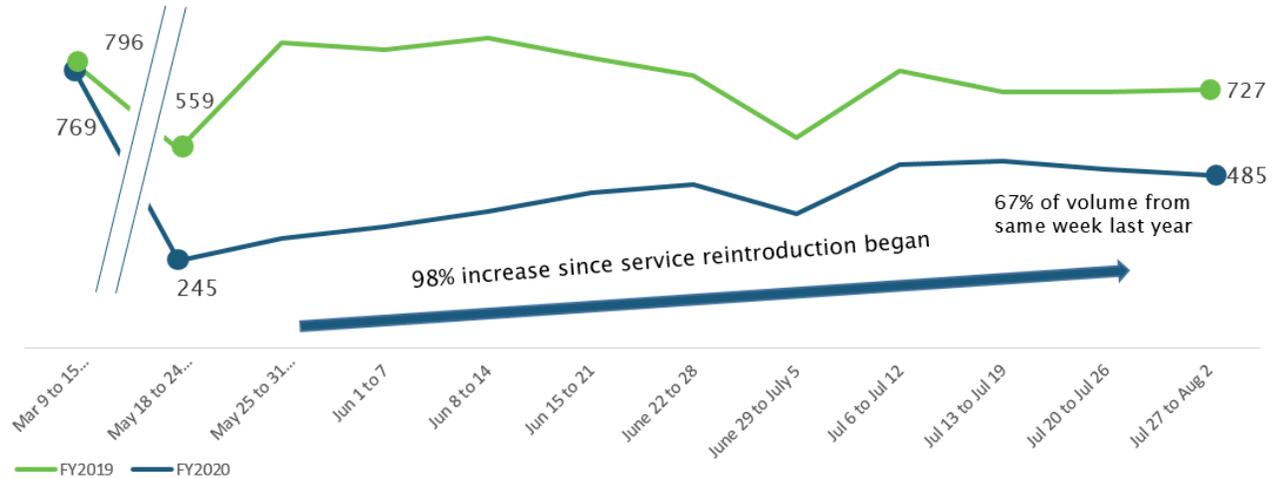
### Diagnostic Imaging Volumes

- Between July 27–Aug 2:
  - 1,746 CTs (**84%** more than May 25, **82%** of volume same week in 2019).
  - 485 MRIs (**98%** more than May 25, **67%** of volume same week in 2019).
  - 1,740 USs (**99%** more than May 25, **83%** of volume same week in 2019).

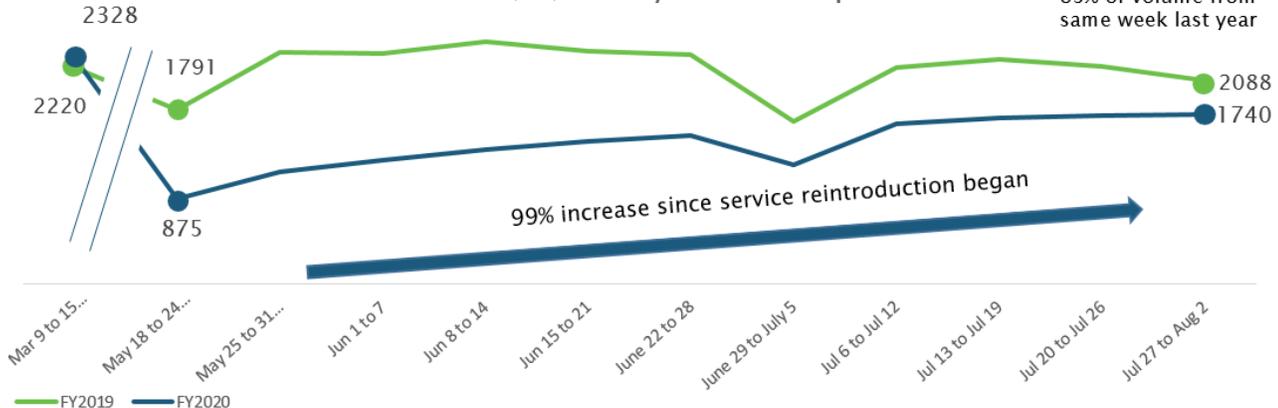
## Computed Tomography (CT) Weekly Trend - Outpatient Visits



## Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Weekly Trend - Outpatient Visits



## Ultrasound (US) Weekly Trend - Outpatient Visits



## Outpatient Laboratory Services

Typically Nova Scotia Health completes more than 90,000 outpatient laboratory tests each month. This includes various blood, urine and fecal tests needed to diagnose, treat and manage various health issues and conditions.

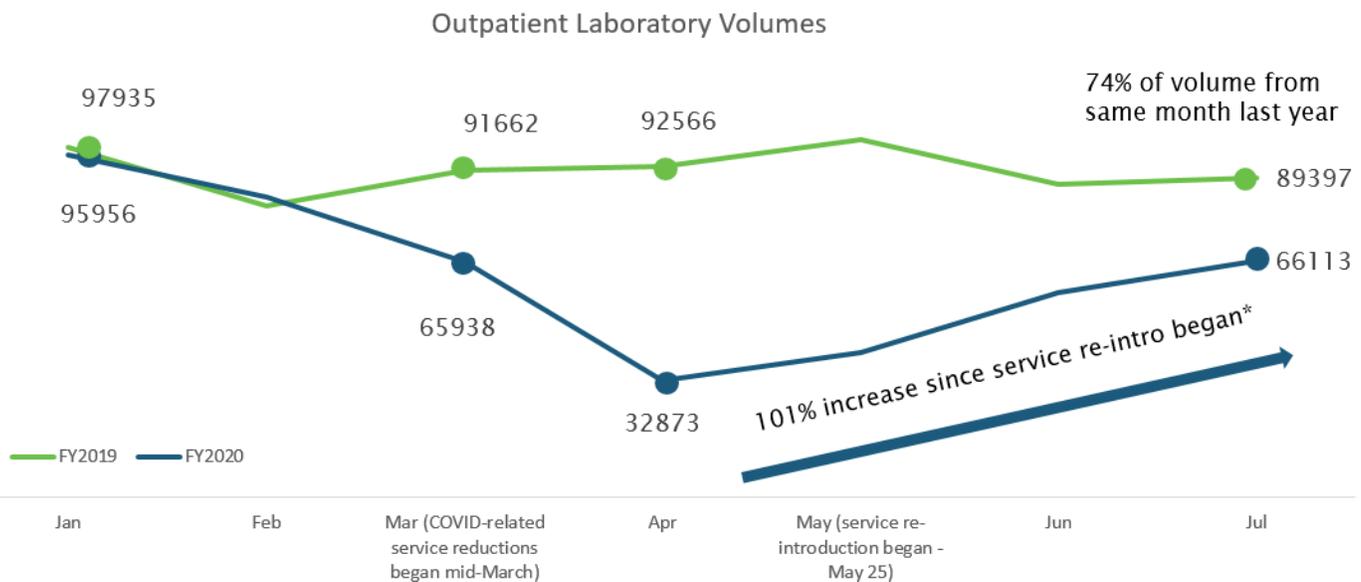
Monthly volumes went as low as 33,000 (April 2020) as result of COVID-19 service reductions.

Currently, all emergency and urgent exams are being performed and work continues to complete semi-urgent exams. Services are now being delivered by appointment only across all sites. Significant laboratory resources continue to be directed at testing for COVID-19.

Data is captured on a monthly basis and this reflects volumes as of the end of July 2020. Ongoing COVID-19 testing activity is not included in these volumes.

### Outpatient Laboratory Volumes

- During the month of July there were 66,113 outpatient visits/procedures completed:
  - **up 101%** since service reintroduction began on May 25.
  - **74% of volume** from July 2019.



\*Compared to full month of April, 2020

## Outpatient Services

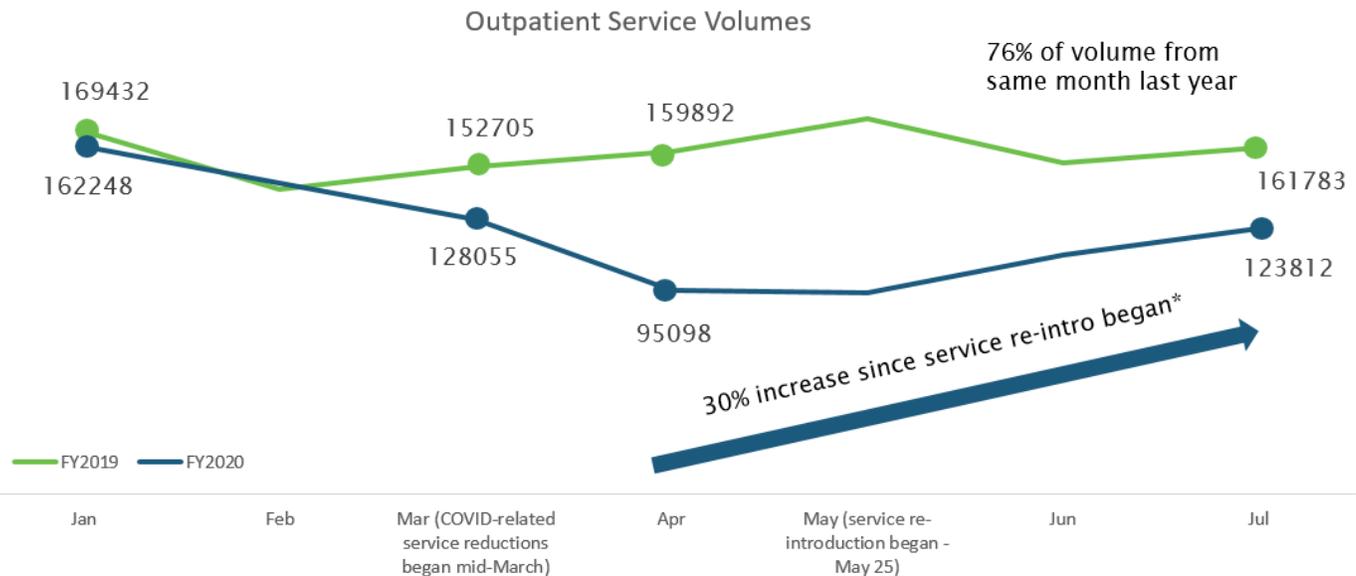
Nova Scotia Health offers a variety of services on an outpatient or ambulatory basis. At outpatient clinics patients receive various types of care including IV therapies, wound care/dressing changes, blood transfusions, and physician specialist clinics such as ear, nose and throat (ENT), dermatology, and ophthalmology.

As a result of COVID-19 service reductions, these volumes went down from more than 150,000 a month, to as few as 95,000 visits/procedures during the month of April. Keeping in mind the need for physical distancing, the number of in-person appointments are increasing while virtual appointments are also used where appropriate.

Data is captured on a monthly basis and reflects most recent data ending July 31, 2020.

### Outpatient Service Volumes

- During the month of July there were 123,812 outpatient visits/procedures completed:
  - **up 30%** since service reintroduction began on May 25.
  - **76% of volume** from July 2019.

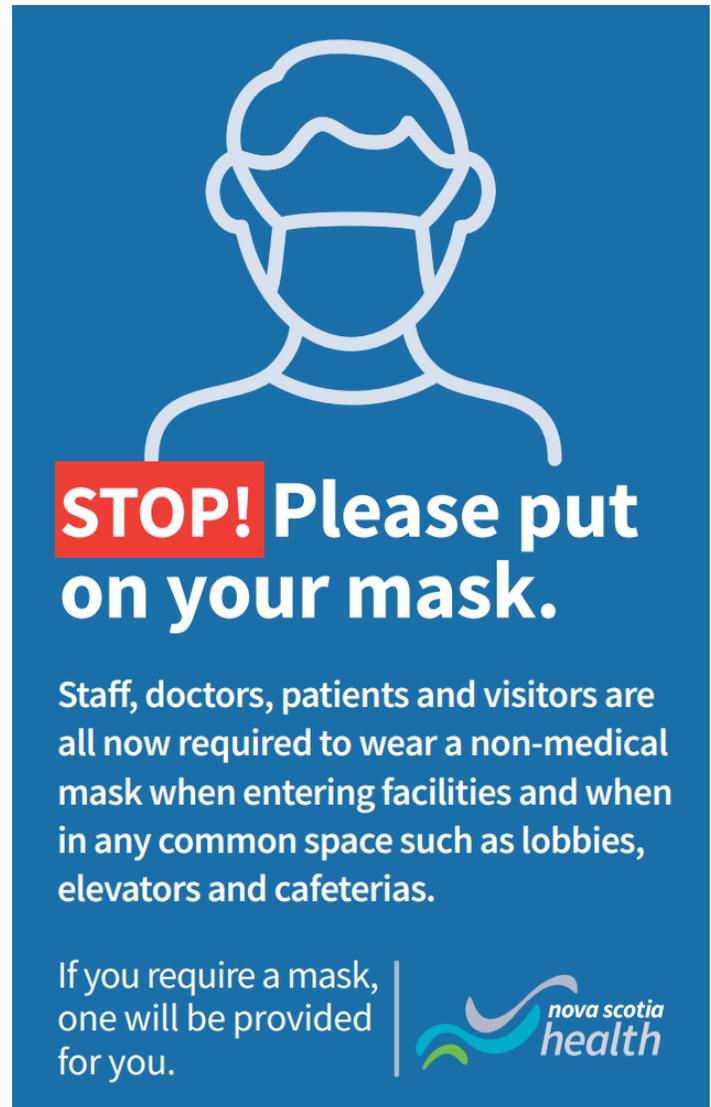


\*Compared to full month of April, 2020

## Service Reintroduction Challenges

Nova Scotia Health acknowledges that while progress is being made to improve access to key health services, we also face a number of challenges that are impacting these efforts.

- We need to maintain public health measures including access control and physical distancing, which is an issue in many hospitals and health centres where space may be limited. This impacts the number of people we can have there at a time, such as in our emergency departments and waiting rooms/areas.
- We are challenged by our inpatient occupancy rates which have an impact on our ability to increase the number of surgeries, for instance. While we need to maintain some inpatient beds to ensure we can respond to any surge in COVID-19 activity, our inpatient occupancy rates were historically high prior to COVID-19 and continue to increase as we treat sick patients.
- We are limited in our ability to transfer appropriate patients to long-term care facilities, which are limiting access to their beds as a part of their COVID-19 responses.



**STOP! Please put on your mask.**

Staff, doctors, patients and visitors are all now required to wear a non-medical mask when entering facilities and when in any common space such as lobbies, elevators and cafeterias.

If you require a mask, one will be provided for you.



As of July 21, Nova Scotia Health requires patients and visitors to wear a non-medical mask when entering hospitals and other health care facilities. Other measures have also been put in place to offer protection, including the installation of plexiglas shields, floor markings and changes to waiting area seating that support physical distancing.