

FFP3 FIT Testing Preparedness SOP

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Introduction

Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) filters the air to remove harmful substances, ensuring the wearer breathes clean air in line with Health and Safety legislation. It is essential protection against airborne diseases and forms part of BrisDoc's Notifiable and High Consequence Infectious Disease Operational PPE and Cleaning SOP. This plan ensures preparedness for situations where a large number of clinicians are required to be fit-tested for FFP3 masks, such as during a pandemic or outbreaks of infectious diseases, allowing a greater number of BrisDoc staff to use RPE safely. Activation and implementation of the plan will be authorised by the IPC Lead in consultation with Head of Nursing and AHPs and Director of Nursing, depending on the situation and assessed level of risk. A Respiratory Hood System is available at each base for situations where Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) is required on a daily basis.

The standard masks used in clinical settings are FFP3, which provide high-level filtration suitable for healthcare environments. To be effective, an FFP3 mask must form a good seal with the wearer's face, and this is verified through a process called fit testing. This SOP explains how to correctly wear and fit test FFP3 masks and how BrisDoc will maintain the competence of trained fit testers to ensure readiness for future implementation.

Related Policies and Documentation

This SOP is to be read in conjunction with the [Infection Prevention Policy](#) (2024) and [the Notifiable and High Consequence Infectious Disease Operational PPE and Cleaning SOP](#) (2024) for BrisDoc

Other useful resources this SOP is based on are:

Health and Safety Executive (2019) [Guidance on Respiratory Protective Equipment Fit Testing](#)

Health and Safety Executive [Fit Testing Basics](#)

https://www.3m.co.uk/3M/en_GB/respiratory-protection-uk/fit-testing/

Fit testing Video

https://players.brightcove.net/2635130879001/SkM7WPFul_default/index.html?videoId=5066830404001

Cleaning: <https://multimedia.3m.com/mws/media/973364O/3m-respirator-fit-testing-frequently-asked-questions-faq.pdf>

Definitions

Qualitative Fit Testing – Qualitative fit testing (QLFT) is a pass/fail test based on the wearer's subjective assessment of any leakage through the face seal region by detecting the introduction of bitter- or sweet-tasting aerosol as a test agent

FFP3: FFP3 masks are commonly used in healthcare settings, particularly during high-risk procedures or outbreaks, to protect both the wearer and others from airborne pathogens. The

number '3' is an indication of the filtration size of the particles the mask will be effective in filtering air in a high risk, health care setting.

Fit Tester: the trained person performing the fit test

Role and Responsibilities

Fit Tester

- Fit Testers must follow Health and Safety at Work legislation and keep up to date with current guidance on fit testing FFP3 masks in primary and urgent care settings.
- A Fit Tester is deemed competent once they have completed accredited training, or refresher training delivered by a tester who has themselves completed an accredited course.
- All Fit Testers at BrisDoc are required to complete refresher training annually.
- Fit Testers should contact the IPC Lead if they have any concerns about fit testing.
- During any large-scale fit testing of the workforce, all related queries must be discussed with the IPC Lead.

Co-Owners

- Co-owners should only wear FFP3 masks if they have successfully completed a fit test for that specific make and model of mask.
- At present, FFP3 masks are not in routine use within BrisDoc. However, if an individual already owns a correctly fit-tested FFP3 mask, they may use it if there is a need and the same make and model is available.
- If the Preparedness Plan is activated, co-owners will be informed and given instructions on what to do next.
- They can refer to the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Policy for more details on IPC and RPE use.

IPC Lead

- The IPC Lead is responsible for managing and implementing the Preparedness Plan. This includes ensuring there are enough trained Fit Testers across BrisDoc services and that they maintain their competence through regular training.
- The IPC Lead will set up a system to record and share fit test results with co-owners and managers as required. These records must be kept for five years after each test in the shared drive under FIT TEST Results.
- IPC Lead is also responsible for ensuring the safety of all co-owners, arranging medical assessments if there are any concerns during fit testing or mask use during a pandemic.

Facilities Manager

- The Facilities Manager will work with the IPC Lead to ensure this Preparedness SOP remains practical and up to date.
- They will help organise training sessions every six months to maintain Fit Tester competence and confidence. These sessions are held alternately at Osprey Court and Charlotte Keel in March and September.
- The test should be carried out in a space that allows good ventilation and air exchange.

- Ensure all equipment is prepared and ready for the training session.
- Ensure the service is prepared to meet future demand by expanding the pool of qualified fit testers.
- Keep the record of the training sessions, attendees and the results of the tests.

The Fit Test Process

Before the Fit Test

- The Fit Tester should explain what the fit test is for, what will happen, and what the results mean.
- The wearer should not eat, drink (except still water), smoke, or chew gum for 30 minutes before the test.
- The wearer must not smoke or use e-cigarettes for at least 1 hour before the test.
- The wearer must be clean-shaven where the mask touches the face. Fit testing cannot be done if there is facial hair in this area.
- The Fit Tester must check that the wearer is medically fit to use RPE and any identified medical concerns or adverse reactions during testing must be recorded and escalated through the incident reporting process.
- The Fit Tester should explain that wearing an FFP3 mask can feel tight or uncomfortable and may cause claustrophobia in some people.
- The wearer should already know how to put on the mask correctly.
- A mirror should be available to help the wearer check the fit.
- If the wearer uses in-mask spectacles, they should wear them during the test.

During the Fit Test

- For qualitative tests using a taste solution, a **sensitivity test** must be done first to check that the wearer can detect the taste.
- If the wearer cannot taste the solution, this method cannot be used, and a different fit test type should be chosen.
- After the sensitivity test, allow time for the wearer to clear their palate before starting the fit test.
- The fit test must be completed on the same day as the sensitivity test. During this time, the wearer should not eat, drink (except water), or smoke.
- To pass the test, the wearer must **not taste** the test agent during any of the test exercises.
- The Fit Tester should check regularly that the nebulisers are working properly and not clogged. If they clog or stop working, the test is invalid and must be repeated.
- The Fit Tester should guide the wearer through normal activities (e.g. talking, moving, breathing deeply) to check the mask seal.
- If the mask leaks or feels uncomfortable, stop and adjust or change the mask before continuing.

After the Fit Test

- The Fit Tester should tell the wearer whether they passed or failed and explain what that means.
- If passed, record the make, model, and size of the mask used.
- If failed, try a different mask and repeat the test.

- All fit test records must be kept for at least five years.
- The wearer must stay clean-shaven where the mask seals each time they wear it.
- Any changes to the wearer's face shape, such as piercings, scars, or weight change, may affect the fit and require retesting.
- The collar and the hood should be cleaned and disinfected with clinell wipes after each fit test subject.
- Nebulizers should be rinsed in fresh water after every session or at least every four hours, or if the nebulizer becomes clogged.

Repeat fit test

Fit tests are valid for 2 years but sometimes it may be necessary to repeat fit tests if the mask that has been tested has changed in terms of size, make or model or is unavailable. Furthermore, the testee may have had a change of facial shape, dental work or piercings which may require a retest.

Train the Trainer

To ensure the sustainability and scalability of our FFP3 fit testing, we will implement a Train the Trainer initiative. Train-the-Trainer participants must have completed an externally accredited course. This program will allow experienced fit testers to train new staff to become competent fit testers.

- Additional fit testers will be recruited as required.
- Formal training sessions will be delivered by experienced trainers, who will be responsible for providing instruction, assessing competence, and offering constructive feedback.
- Trainees are expected to attend all training sessions, demonstrate competency, and adhere to the standards outlined in this SOP.
- Trainers will assess competence through direct observation and practical demonstrations.
- Ongoing support and refresher training will be provided every six months to maintain high standards and ensure consistency.
- BrisDoc will provide the necessary resources, scheduling, and oversight to support the successful delivery and continuation of the programme.

Equipments provided by Facilities for the training

- Clinell wipes
- Fit testing Kits
- FT32 solution & FT30 solution
- FFP3 masks (3 types)
- Mirrors
- Box of tissues
- Well ventilated room
- Black bag for rubbish

Version Control

Date	Version	Author	Change Details
24/10/2025	1.1	Shelly Joseph	Rewrote the SOP and added the plans for train the trainer program

Appendix 1 – How to do a Fit Test Documentation

Qualitative Fit test

Please keep a copy for Brisdoc records and give one to the individual tested. This test is valid for 2 years with exception of changes in face shapes. Please stand for the whole test.

Date Tested		Retest Date		Location	
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Personal Details	Bitrex	Saccharin	PPE Details
Name			PPE worn
ID			
No facial hair / clean shaven			PPE Make
Medically fit for fit testing - activities			
Medically fit to wear a mask			PPE Model
Not smoked or eaten for 30mins			
Allergies / Claustrophobia/ wearing mask/			

Mask Details	RPE pre-checks
Mask Make	Visual inspection- hold up to light
Mask Model	Donning
Mask Size	Pre-use fit check
	Cover mask and breath in - -ve pressure
	Check fit with glasses

The sensitivity test

Use nebulizer A and solution A (sensitivity)

Check function of nebulizer, bungs removed, wearer breathing through mouth tongue slightly out

Up to 10 squeezes

Up to 20 squeezes

Up to 30 squeezes

Clean mouth, palate and lips with water

The fit test

Use Nebulizer B and Solution B (Fit Test). Don mask and check fit – check nose area and remould nose piece, negative pressure check

Check palate and lips are clean by sipping water, function of nebulizers, both bungs removed, wearer breathing through mouth with tongue slightly out

Use 10 initial squeezes, start stop watch and then 5 squeezes every 30 seconds

Use 20 initial squeezes, start stop watch and then 10 squeezes every 30 seconds

Use 30 initial squeezes, start stop watch and then 15 squeezes every 30 seconds

Normal breathing 60 seconds	Pass/fail	Procedure if Fit test fails 1. Remove hood 2. Examine fit on mask on face 3. Remove and inspect mask 4. Advise to drink water and clean palate and lips/ wipe face 5. Wait 30mins -no smoking / food
Deep breathing 60 seconds	Pass/fail	
Head side to side 60 seconds	Pass/fail	
Head up and down 60 seconds	Pass/fail	
Counting 100 backwards 60 seconds	Pass/fail	
Bending 60 seconds	Pass/fail	
Normal breathing 60 seconds	Pass/fail	

FFP3 Fit Testing Preparedness SOP

Overall Pass	Pass/fail	6. Conduct new sensitivity test 7. New fit test with new mask 8. Re-test same make & model & size
Reveal test	Pass/fail	
User Print & Sign		
Fit Tester Print & Sign		



Public Health
England



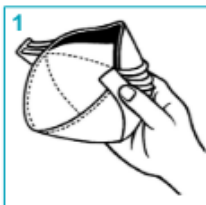
How to put on and fit check an **FFP3 respirator**

Key facts

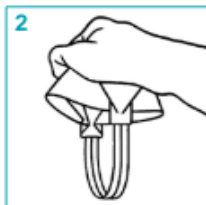
- FFP3 respirators are designed to protect the wearer from breathing in small airborne particles which might contain viruses.
- They should be worn when carrying out potentially infectious aerosol-generating procedures on patients with symptoms of a viral respiratory infection, or where a patient is known/suspected to have an infection spread via the aerosol route or when caring for patients known/suspected to be infected with a newly identified respiratory virus.
- FFP3 respirators are available in different sizes and designs, use only the model and size which a fit test has shown is correct for the wearer.
- The respirator images shown below are for illustrative purposes only. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Follow these five steps to fit your respirator correctly

Tip: It may be helpful to look in the mirror when fitting your respirator



Hold the respirator in one hand and separate the edges to fully open it with the other hand. Bend the nose wire (where present) at the top of the respirator to form a gentle curve.



Turn the respirator upside down to expose the two headbands, and then separate them using your index finger and thumb. Hold the headbands with your index finger and thumb and cup the respirator under your chin.



Position the upper headband on the crown of your head, above the ears, not over them. Position the lower strap at the back of your head below your ears.



Ensure that the respirator is flat against your cheeks.



Mould the nosepiece across the bridge of your nose by firmly pressing down with your fingers until you have a good facial fit, if a good fit cannot be achieved, do not proceed.

Now perform a fit check



Cover the front of the respirator with both hands, being careful not to disturb the position of the respirator on the face.

For an unvalved product – exhale sharply; for a valved product – inhale sharply.

If air flows around the nose, readjust the nosepiece; if air flows around the edges of the respirator, readjust the headbands.

A successful fit check is when there is no air leaking from the edges of the respirator. Always perform a fit check before entering the work area.

If a successful fit check cannot be achieved, remove and refit the respirator.

If you still cannot obtain a successful fit check, do not enter the work area.

These images are for illustrative purposes only. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions.

Remember

- Respirators must be used with other necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gowns, gloves and compatible eye protection.
- Respirators should be discarded after each use.
- Respirators should be disposed of as healthcare waste.
- Hand hygiene must always be performed following removal and disposal of PPE.
- The fit check is not a substitute for fit testing

Fit testing should be carried out by a properly trained competent fit tester.

Other guidance is available on bacterial infections and pulmonary tuberculosis.

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Appendix 3 How to perform a FIT Test

3M Science.
Applied to Life.™

Guide to 3M qualitative fit testing.



Reusable half masks



Filtering facepiece respirators

3M™ FT-10 (sweet) and 3M™ FT-30 (bitter) fit test kits are suitable for filtering facepiece respirators and half-face masks fitted with particulate or combination filters.

The taste test

Part one: the sensitivity test

- 1 Add half a teaspoon of sensitivity solution (in red labelled bottle) into the sensitivity nebuliser (marked in red).
- 2 Put test hood on person.
- 3 Ask person to breathe through their mouth with their tongue at the front and ask them to indicate immediately when they taste solution.
- 4 Slowly squeeze solution into the hood and count the number of squeezes it takes for the solution to be tasted.
- 5 Ask the person to take a drink of water and wait until the taste has cleared, making sure that they wipe their lips to remove any traces of solution.



Stop the test if solution is not tasted after 30 squeezes. Try an alternative solution:

Sweet taste	3M FT 11 (Sensitivity solution) 3M FT12 (Fit test solution)
Bitter taste	3M FT 31 (Sensitivity solution) 3M FT32 (Fit test solution)

3M Personal Safety Division
3M Centre, Cain Road, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 8HT. Tel: 0870 60 800 60
Personal Safety Division
3M Ireland, The Iveagh Building, The Park, Carrickmines, Dublin 18, Ireland

! Wearers must be clean shaven to get a good fit with a respirator for the fit test and every time the respirator is worn.

! Please note that in order to carry out a full fit test, all the steps detailed below must be followed (parts one and two).

Part two: the fit test

- 1 Add half a teaspoon of the fit test solution (in black labelled bottle) into the sensitivity nebuliser (marked in black).
- 2 Make sure respirator is fitted correctly. Refer to 3M fitting instructions or posters for correct procedure. Please ensure any other headworn PPE required by the wearer is worn during the fit test.
- 3 Put test hood on person.
- 4 Introduce solution in an 'initial dose' and start the exercises.

Number of squeezes needed in part one	Number of squeezes needed for initial dose	Number of squeezes for 'top-up' dose every 30 seconds
1-10	10	5
11-20	20	10
21-30	30	15

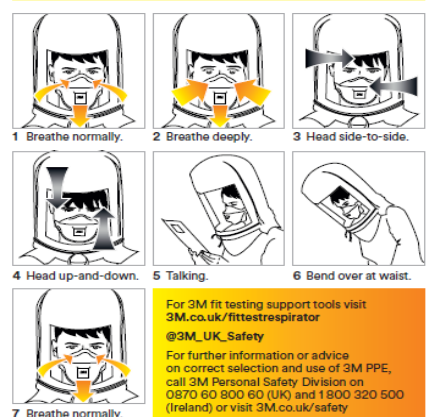
Add a 'top-up' dose after every 30 seconds as per below:
- 5 After the initial dose, ask the person to carry out the seven exercises shown in the images to the right for one minute and indicate immediately if solution is tasted. Remember to add 'top-up' dose every 30 seconds.
- 6 Record results

If solution is not tasted after all seven exercises, they have passed the test with that respirator. If solution is tasted, stop test, clean mouth, face and hands, refit respirator and start part one of the test again.

If solution is still tasted on the second attempt, stop test, clean hands, mouth and face, and try another face fit test with an alternative 3M respirator.

In the event of another failure, please call the 3M Health and Safety Helpline on 0870 60 800 60 (UK) or 1 800 320 500 (Ireland).

The seven exercises



For 3M fit testing support tools visit [3M.co.uk/fittestrespirator](https://3m.co.uk/fittestrespirator)
@3M_UK_Safety
For further information or advice on correct selection and use of 3M PPE, call 3M Personal Safety Division on 0870 60 800 60 (UK) and 1 800 320 500 (Ireland) or visit [3M.co.uk/safety](https://3m.co.uk/safety)

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