



19th Jan. 2022

Deputy Réada Cronin,
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Issued via email to: reada.cronin@oireachtas.ie

PQ Number: 63579/21

Question: To ask the Minister for Health the reason the HSE is asking persons including healthcare workers arriving at vaccination centres to replace their high-protection masks such as FFP2 with those of lower protection quality; if he will publish the scientific basis on which this request is made; if, in the circumstances of the highly-transmissible omicron variant, his Department is content for the HSE to continue with this practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cronin,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Wish to advise that it is practice in the test centres that a clean surgical mask is provided to people when they attend for a testing appointment. It is not feasible to determine if a mask worn by a member of the public has been freshly applied when they present for a Covid-19 test.

We have considered the concerns expressed by some staff and members of the public. While we continue to offer a clean surgical mask and consider that this is the appropriate mask for use in this setting, vaccination and testing centres will accept that people with a clear preference may wear their own mask provided that it is intact, visibly clean and covers the nose and mouth completely.

It is key that the public continue to follow Public Health guidance, such as hand hygiene, mask wearing and keeping socially distanced to help in the prevention of the spread of Covid-19.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Damien McCallion
National Director
National Lead Test & Trace and Vaccination Programme