

# PPE Use and Care



Personal protective equipment (PPE) exists to create a barrier between you and a patient/resident/client to prevent spread of a contaminant such as the virus that causes COVID-19 to either you or the patient. It exists to help protect your skin, airways, mucous membranes, and/or clothing. This factsheet summarizes use and care of gloves, gowns, masks, and eye protection.

Refer also to the training materials relevant to your job, sector, or workplace.

## **Gloves**

Glove use is secondary to proper hand washing, and improper use of gloves can lead to transmission of pathogens. Because barriers are imperfect, it is vital that you thoroughly wash your hands before putting on gloves, and after glove removal.

- Inspect gloves for any damage prior to use.
- Select glove appropriate to task and wear the correct size of gloves.
- Put on gloves immediately before activity for which they are indicated.
- Clean hands before putting on gloves.
- Practice proper glove removal technique.
- Remove and discard gloves immediately after activity for which they were used.
- Wash hands thoroughly immediately after glove removal.
- Change or remove gloves if moving from one patient to another, or if moving from a contaminated body site to a clean body site on the same client/patient/resident.
- Change or remove gloves after touching a contaminated site and before touching a clean site or surface.
- Disposable gloves are intended for single use. Do not wash or re-use disposable gloves.

## Gowns

Gowns are worn when a procedure or care activity is likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, or excretions of potentially infectious material. They should be cuffed and long-sleeved, and offer full coverage of the body front, from neck to mid-thigh or below.

- A lab coat is not a substitute for a gown.
- Gowns should only be worn when providing care for clients/patients/residents.
- When use of a gown is indicated, the gown should be put on immediately before the task and must be worn properly (i.e. tied at top and around waist).
- Remove gown immediately after the task for which it has been used, in a manner that prevents contamination of clothing or skin and prevents agitation of the gown (shaking can send pathogens such as viruses into the air where they can be inhaled).
- Discard used gown immediately after removal into appropriate receptacle. Do not hang gowns for later use.
- Do not re-use gowns. Do not go from patient to patient wearing the same gown.

## Masks (surgical/procedure)

Masks are used, in addition to eye protection, to protect the mucous membranes of the nose and mouth when a procedure or care activity is likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, or excretions of potentially infectious material, or within two meters of a coughing client/patient/resident.

Choose the proper mask for the activity, and ensure it securely covers the nose and mouth. It should be of a quality sufficient to prevent penetration by droplets that may be invisible to the eye.

- Select a mask appropriate to the activity.
- Ensure mask securely covers the nose and mouth.
- Change mask if it becomes soiled or wet.
- Do not touch mask while wearing it.
- Follow mask removal protocols immediately after completion of task and discard mask into appropriate receptacle.
- Do not allow mask to hang or dangle around the neck.
- Clean hands after removing mask.
- Do not re-use disposable masks.

- Do not fold the mask or put it in a pocket for later use.
- Minimize risk by keeping mask in place throughout intended use, as every contact between gloves/hands and face is a contamination risk.

## Eye protection

Eye protection is used to protect the mucous membranes of the eyes when it is anticipated a procedure or care activity is likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, or secretions or excretions of potentially infectious material. It is usually used together with a mask.

Eye protection includes safety glasses, safety goggles, face shields, and visors attached to masks. It does not include prescription eyeglasses or sunglasses. If eye protection is not disposable, it should be cleaned prior to re-use. It must include a barrier to splashes or coughs from the side.

- Eye protection should be used whenever there is a potential for splashes or sprays to the eyes.
- Eye protection must be removed immediately after the task for which it was used and discarded into waste or placed in an appropriate receptacle for cleaning.
- Eye protection that is shared must be clean and disinfected before worn by another worker.
- Prescription eyeglasses are not acceptable as eye protection.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

**CUPE National Health and Safety Branch** 1375 St. Laurent Boulevard, OTTAWA, ON K1G 0Z7  
Tel: (844) 237-1590 (toll free) Email: [health\\_safety@cupe.ca](mailto:health_safety@cupe.ca)