



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

COVID-19: Interim Guide to Using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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<https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/communicable-disease-control/coronavirus>

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Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Requirements for Health Professionals

As per the Ministry of Health's current mask policy effective since November 4, 2020 and updated on August 31, 2021, all healthcare workers and non-clinical staff **must** wear a medical mask at all times in healthcare facilities and settings where healthcare is provided, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking. http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Mask_Use_Health_Care_Facilities.pdf

A critical component of Routine Practices is performing a **Point of Care Risk Assessment** (PCRA) at every healthcare encounter by all health professionals. PCRA will enable Health Care Workers to determine the appropriate Infection Prevention and Control measures including PPE that are required to protect clients, staff, and the environment. For example, with COVID-19 Health Care Workers are required to follow **Contact and Droplet Precautions** when within 2 meters of a client that has respiratory symptoms or risk for transmission of a respiratory illness.

The PPE for this level of precaution includes:

- Gown
- Gloves
- Medical mask
- Eye protection (face shield or goggles)

All health professionals should be knowledgeable in conducting an effective point of care risk assessment (i.e. preliminary assessment of transmission and exposure risks, the task/care to be performed, the client's clinical presentation, physical state of the environment and the healthcare setting). This link provides a PCRA tool that may be helpful: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_PointOfCareRiskAssessTool.pdf

There are no evidence-based guidelines supporting the use of hair and shoe coverings in clinical settings caring for COVID-19 client/clients/residents. However, there may be specific occupations that may require additional and different PPE. In such cases, please consult with your organization's Occupational Health and Safety. In accordance with your Workplace Health policies, you may choose to have a separate pair of shoes at work and utilize disinfecting wipes as needed. Adding your own additional pieces of PPE beyond those recommended may result in harm by increasing risk of self-contamination during the doffing process.

Follow appropriate donning and doffing guidelines. Please find BCCDC posters for donning and doffing at these links: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment>

http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_AdditionalPPEPoster.pdf

Use N95 respirators in addition to Contact and Droplet Precautions when performing Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMPs). All health care workers require annual fit-testing for an N95 respirator. When using a new model, fit testing is required. If the use of an N95 Respirator is not suitable, an Elastomeric Half Face-piece Respirator (EHFR) may be substituted, however a fit test is required prior to use.

Long-Term Care/Seniors Assisted Living Settings

Health care workers and non-clinical staff:

- All persons working in a Long-Term Care facility or Seniors Assisted Living residence **must** wear a medical mask at all times, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking.

Other Health Care Facilities and Settings where Health Care is Provided

Health care workers and non-clinical staff:

- All persons working in a clinical unit/setting/client care area **must** wear a medical mask, including in common areas and break rooms unless eating and/or drinking.
- All persons working in non-clinical settings **must** follow guidance for mask use in accordance with their workplace COVID-19 Safety Plan(s) required by WorkSafe BC.

The rationale for universal masking of staff in healthcare settings is to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19 infection from staff to clients at a time when no symptoms of illness are recognized, but the virus can be transmitted. The rationale for staff to wear eye protection is to protect the mucus membranes of staff from accidental exposure to uncovered coughs and sneezes.

Indications for Contact and Droplet and Airborne precautions are listed in [Table 1](#) below. **This document does not replace clinical judgement.** All staff should be encouraged to still conduct a Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA) to determine whether the proposed PPE is appropriate to protect from any blood or body fluid exposure related to the task they will be performing.

Table 1: PPE Recommendations for Health Professionals

All clients **must** wear a medical mask when entering and moving around a health care facility, including client transport, except when requested to remove their mask by a health care professional. All visitors **must** wear a medical mask when entering and moving around any health care facility, including clinical and non-clinical areas. Exceptions to the Policy may need to be applied for people with certain medical conditions.

Role	Task	When client is symptomatic (and within 2m of client)	When client is asymptomatic (and within 2m of client)	What does the client need to wear
CHN	Immunizations	Contact and Droplet precautions	Procedure mask, eye protection****, and gloves* See here for more information.	Re-schedule appointment until symptoms resolved, if applicable. Provide procedure mask.
	Clinic Visits	Contact and Droplet precautions	Procedure mask, eye protection****, and gloves*	Provide procedure mask
	Specimen Collection	Contact and Droplet precautions	Contact and Droplet precautions	Provide procedure mask
	Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMPs)	Contact and Droplet precautions with N95 respirator	Contact and Droplet precautions with N95 respirator	Provide procedure mask
	Screening (without client contact)	Contact and Droplet precautions	Procedure mask, eye protection****	Provide procedure mask
	Testing	Contact and Droplet precautions	Contact and Droplet precautions	Provide procedure mask
	CPR	Contact and Droplet precautions with N95 respirator	Contact and Droplet precautions with N95 respirator	Cover face with protective, breathable barrier. (Please refer to the most current BCCDC guidelines).
CHN/HCCN/HCA	Home Visits	Contact and Droplet precautions	Procedure mask, eye protection****, and gloves*	Provide procedure mask
Homemaker	Home Visits	Contact and Droplet precautions Use PPE as per workplace health policies***	Procedure mask and eye protection**** Use PPE as per workplace health policies***	Provide procedure mask
First Responders	Any encounter with client	Contact and Droplet precautions	Procedure mask, eye protection****, and gloves*	Provide procedure mask
	CPR	Contact and Droplet precautions with N95 respirator	Contact and Droplet precautions with N95 respirator	Cover face with protective, breathable barrier. (Please refer to the most current BCCDC guidelines).
Medical Transport	Driving	Procedure mask** If Driver is in direct contact with client, don full PPE for Contact and Droplet precautions.	Procedure mask**	Provide procedure mask. Recommend seating client at least 2m from driver if possible.

Custodial Staff	Cleaning within 2m of client	Contact and Droplet precautions. Please see this link for considerations when cleaning after an AGMP. Use PPE as per workplace health policies***	Procedure mask and eye protection**** Use PPE as per workplace health policies***	Facility should provide procedure mask
	Terminal clean	Contact and Droplet precautions. Please see this link for considerations when cleaning after an AGMP. Use PPE as per workplace health policies***	Use PPE as per workplace health policies***	N/A
Reception	Screening	Staff may be protected by transparent barriers that will allow for communication between them and client or other persons who present for screening. Maintain 2 metre distancing if a transparent barrier is not in place. Must also wear a procedure mask.		Provide procedure mask

*Gloves are indicated when in direct contact with clients based on exposure risk to infectious agents from tasks being performed. Gloves are single-use and do not replace the need for hand hygiene before and after direct contact with clients and/or their immediate environment.
 **Don mask appropriately to avoid vision impairment. Contact Workplace Health if mask causes vision impairment to discuss alternatives.
 ***e.g. Nitrile/Heavy Duty Gloves; Disposable eye protection; Eye protection (if risk of splash from contaminated material or chemicals); Apron if risk of splash; Boots or closed work shoes
 **** Based on PCRA
Please note: If a client is asked to don a procedure mask, ensure instructions are available for appropriate donning. Please see: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_SurgicalMaskPoster.pdf
 Please note, procedure and surgical masks are medical grade masks. These terms may be used interchangeably.

Conservation Measures for Personal Protective Equipment

Purpose

This document provides a multi-faceted approach to keep health care professionals and community members safe while conserving Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Conserving individual pieces of PPE is part of a larger process of re-aligning care delivery to promote client and staff safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Situation

Due to ongoing limited supplies of PPE in British Columbia, appropriate and safe conservation measures for PPE should be implemented. Conserving individual pieces of PPE is part of a larger process of re-aligning care delivery to promote client and staff safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important that all health care professionals work together to conserve our PPE. For additional information, please see this link: [Personal Protective Equipment \(bccdc.ca\)](https://www.bccdc.ca)

Assessment

Some PPE is less likely, if used properly, to come into direct contact with clients and surfaces, though it may be exposed to respiratory droplets during use. For this reason, procedure mask or N95 respirators are appropriate for extended use and disposable goggles/face shields may be appropriate for limited re-use, in line with the guidance below.

Recommendation

1. The following strategies will help conserve PPE supplies during the COVID-19 Pandemic by reducing the need for PPE.
 - Community wide physical distancing and supporting safe separation for those self-isolating
 - Reviewing programs and supporting Community Leadership to determine which programs are urgent and should continue at this time. Assessing which urgent services can safely be delivered remotely (i.e. by phone, tele-health). Only providing home visits if essential.
 - Encouraging scheduled appointments where a [Point of Care Risk Assessment](#) can be completed prior to the appointment. Delaying non-urgent care for symptomatic clients.
 - Implementing mechanical changes to protect staff and clients. (i.e. indicate acceptable physical distancing if lining up is required and consider physical separator at reception area)
 - Clients with respiratory symptoms must be kept separate from asymptomatic clients whenever possible. Consider setting up triage areas of care outside of usual care delivery areas and designate healthcare professional specific to that area.
 - Ensure appropriate [environmental and equipment cleaning practices](#).

2. The following general principles will help conserve PPE supplies during the COVID-19 Pandemic when use of PPE is indicated. Please use these in conjunction with [Table 2](#).
 - Ensure appropriate and rational use of PPE at all times based on the Point of Care Risk Assessment. Health care professionals need to follow Contact and Droplet Precautions to be protected from this coronavirus.
 - PPE that is used in client care is considered contaminated and should be treated as such. If you touch or adjust your mask, respirator, or eye protection, perform hand hygiene.
 - Follow appropriate doffing procedures and routine precautions when removing PPE to avoid self-contamination from the contaminated equipment.
 - Use a formal and centralized process for PPE storage, management, and distribution. Secure PPE inventory.

Table 2: Guidance on Extended Use and Limited Re-use of Personal Protective Equipment

This table is to be used in conjunction with Table 1: PPE Recommendations for Health Professionals		
PPE	Extended Use	Limited Re-use
Procedure Mask	<p>Wear the same mask (without removal) throughout workflow and between clients without touching the mask.</p> <p>Change the mask only if it is too damp, soiled or damaged for safe use, and/or if your shift includes a meal break. Any time that a mask is doffed, a new procedure mask must be donned for the next healthcare encounter to prevent contamination of the health professional.</p>	N/A
N95 respirators	<p>Only to be used for AGMPs.</p> <p>Can be used beyond manufacturer’s stated expiry date**</p> <p>Change the N95 respirator only if it is too damp, soiled or damaged for safe use, and/or if your shift includes a meal break.</p>	N/A
Eye Protection	If required based on PCRA, wear the same eye protection throughout your workflow and between clients without touching the eye protector.	Yes. Please refer to BCCDC Cleaning and Disinfection Instructions for Eye/Facial Protection .
Gloves	N/A	N/A
Isolation Gowns	<p>If extended use of gown is required.</p> <p>Change the gown when there is a risk of cross contamination between clients. Also change the gown when it is too damp, soiled or damaged for safe use, and/or if your shift includes a meal break.</p>	N/A
<p>*N95 for AGMP **BC Ministry of Health (March 25, 2020). http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_ppe_allocation_framework.pdf</p>		

Questions?

- For health care questions or questions about Communicable Disease Emergency Response Planning, please email cdmgmt@fnha.ca
- For general questions about COVID-19, please email covid19@fnha.ca
- For information about ordering Personal Protective Equipment or other supply and funding related questions, please email covid19needs@fnha.ca
- For questions about work related safety precautions, please email OHN.clinic@fnha.ca
- For Infection Prevention and Control related queries, please contact IPC@fnha.ca