

## MEMO

**Date:** December 10, 2020  
**To:** All Health Care Workers  
**From:** **Dr. Brent Roussin**  
Chief Provincial Public Health Officer  
**Lanette Siragusa**  
Chief Nursing Officer, Shared Health  
**Re:** **COVID 19 – Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

---

During a pandemic, decisions are often made quickly in order to stay a step or two ahead of the virus. These decisions are supported by the most current available evidence and are informed by clinical experts locally as well as the practices of other jurisdictions.

Keeping health care workers safe has been - and remains - our priority. As community transmission of COVID-19 remains very high, we are examining the existing guidance related to personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements to ensure that health care workers are protected appropriately in all settings and situations.

Experts in Infection Prevention and Control (IP&C) and Occupational and Environmental Safety and Health (OESH) are working closely with clinical leaders from across the province, and provincial supply chain and logistics representatives. It is critical that our guidance reflect the most current evidence, is informed by clinical experts, and is supported by adequate available supply.

Together, we are working to update guidance that will ensure health care workers continue to be protected from potential exposure and infection while also supporting appropriate use and the preservation of supplies for the duration of the pandemic.

We know that access and appropriate use of personal protective equipment has been the source of anxiety for staff and has generated many questions. Our approach has been carefully planned to ensure that our vital workforce is protected and we are prepared to adapt or enhance these guidelines as evidence indicates.

Each member of our health care team plays an important role in preventing the spread of this virus. While PPE is an important tool to keep you safe, it is not a replacement for your training and knowledge of basic infection prevention and control practices that you use each and every day.

While we are reviewing the latest evidence and adapting Manitoba's PPE guidelines to reflect the current spread of this virus in our province, all staff are encouraged to refresh their knowledge and education on basic IP&C principles like hand hygiene and staying home when sick, as well as the available resources to support appropriate donning, doffing and disposal or reuse of PPE.

### **Wear your PPE correctly:**

**Masks must cover your mouth and your nose in order to be effective.** They should not be worn on foreheads, beneath chins or hanging off your ears.

**Procedure masks** - There are different levels of procedure masks. Level 2 and 3 masks are more resistant to splashes (Level 3 masks provide slightly more splash resistance than Level 2) and both have better filtering capabilities than Level 1 masks. As a result of these filtering abilities, Level 2 or 3 masks may be harder to breathe through.

Health care workers are encouraged to use Level 3 masks in situations where a procedure mask is recommended. While Level 1 masks remain available and may be stored in supply rooms they are recommended/reserved for inpatient/resident use.

**Double masking increases your risk of self-contamination.** Wearing multiple procedure masks at the same time or wearing a procedure mask over top of an N95 raises your risk of contamination when doffing. Wear PPE according to the guidelines, dispose of soiled, damp or damaged masks and wash your hands before putting on a new one.

**Eye protection must be worn appropriately.** Goggles on your forehead or around your neck will not protect you.

**Avoid cross contamination.** Perform hand hygiene regularly, avoid touching your mask, and if you must adjust or reposition your mask, perform hand hygiene immediately. Be mindful of touching your nose or eyes as this increases the potential that you will contaminate yourself. Again, if you touch your mask, wash your hands.

**How to properly don:** [https://youtu.be/pQ4vn\\_a-PGo](https://youtu.be/pQ4vn_a-PGo)

**How to properly doff:** <https://youtu.be/2uzDgt7I5ME>

**Appropriate PPE for COVID-19 Poster:** <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-appropriate-pe-poster.pdf>

### **Keep your distance and limit your close contacts:**

Wear your PPE consistently and as directed, including when caring for patients/residents/clients and when consulting with your colleagues.

During busy work hours and in busy clinical workplaces, ensuring six feet of separation from your coworkers may not be possible. Wearing your PPE consistently and properly will help protect you.

Maintain **physical distancing** at all times when you are not wearing medical PPE. This includes breaks, when drinking or eating, and if you carpool to work.

**Limit your close contacts** and your potential exposure in the community. Wear a mask, wash your hands regularly and only go out for essential items.

As information about COVID-19 evolves and changes, we will continue to review and adapt our guidance to ensure recommendations remain safe, appropriate and current. The health and safety of the physicians and staff who work throughout Manitoba's health system remain our top priorities.