

COVID-19 - Tips for Extended PPE Use

NOTE: Extended use of PPE is a deviation from usual Infection Prevention and Control Practices. Follow the posted Shared Health guidance to ensure you are wearing PPE safely.

Latest updates are included in BLUE.

SKIN CONCERNS

Concern: *My hands are dry/cracking.*

Action: The following are tips to prevent/lessen dry skin due to frequent hand hygiene:

- Moisturize often – both at home and at work.
 - At work, use the moisturizer provided by your organization. This moisturizer is compatible with the alcohol-based hand rub provided. Moisturize at the beginning of each shift as well as at break and other times when you know you won't have to perform hand hygiene for a while (e.g. when charting).
 - At home, moisturize frequently, especially after hand hygiene and before bed.
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR). ABHR has been proven to be less drying than washing hands with soap and water
http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2012/aspc-phac/HP40-74-2012-eng.pdf
- If you use soap and water:
 - Use warm water, not too hot or too cold
 - Rinse your hands thoroughly – don't leave any soap residue, which can lead to skin breakdown
 - Pat dry, don't rub your hands with paper towel. This reduces friction on the skin
- Avoid wearing rings, bracelets and if you can, wrist watches. Not only do they interfere with thorough hand hygiene they can also trap soap and lead to skin irritation and breakdown.
- In the colder months be sure to wear mitts or winter gloves when you are outside to protect your skin, as wind and cold temperatures can be damaging/irritating to skin.

Concern: *My skin is breaking down.*

Action: To prevent and address skin breakdown refer to:

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-ppe-and-skin-injuries-internal-oh-process.pdf>.

PERSONAL CARE CONCERNS

Concern: *I'm thirsty. How can I drink during my shift when I have to wear a mask all the time?*

Action: Staying hydrated during your shift is very important! Here are a few tips to help you stay hydrated during your shift:

- Have something to drink before you start your shift and before putting on your mask.
- Choose beverages that hydrate – like water. Do not choose beverages such as coffee/tea that do not hydrate

- When you take a break to use the washroom, depending on the zone, you should either remove and store your mask (Green Zone) or remove and discard your mask (when leaving Orange or Red Zones). After your washroom break take some time to drink water or other fluids. Although it can be challenging it's also important to take frequent washroom breaks throughout your shift.
- Remember to hydrate well during your meal breaks.

Concern: *My nose is itchy under my mask.*

Action: An itchy nose is difficult to deal with without removing or touching your mask, so you should look at what action you can take to prevent the itch:

- If you wear make-up, we recommend not wearing it when you will be wearing a mask to cut down on irritation.
- If your nose tends to be dry, use a non-petrolatum (petroleum jelly) based moisturizer.
- Consider using a barrier wipe <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-ppe-skin-injury-grg.pdf>. Be aware the use of a dressing may interfere with and is not recommended with the use of certain N95 respirators
- Remember to breathe! If your nose becomes itchy, consider taking some deep breaths which may distract you from the itching sensation. Take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth like you are blowing through a straw.
- Moving your mask away from your nose to scratch it or touching the front of your mask to scratch through your mask will contaminate your mask *and* your hands so don't do this! When you have removed your mask for a break or at the end of shift and you need to scratch your nose remember to protect yourself by performing hand hygiene before and after.

Concern: *My face is breaking out.*

Action: If you find you are getting acne breakouts from wearing a mask continuously:

- Consider washing your face before and after your shift. Use a gentle facial cleanser (pH balanced) and moisturizer. If you are applying a moisturizer, try to apply it at least an hour before your shift.
- Avoid wearing make-up as it can also clog pores. If you do wear makeup avoid application over affected areas.
- Remember to change your mask if it becomes wet, damaged or soiled.

Concern: *My face gets hot and sweaty when wearing a mask.*

Action: Wearing masks for a prolonged period of time can become quite warm and uncomfortable, consider these tips:

- If your work includes bathing patients/residents/clients, consider bathing schedules to be done at cooler times of the day and/or allowing more time for the humidity in the room to decrease.
- Consider securing long fringes/bangs with a clip and remember to tie long hair back away from your face

- Take your breaks!
- Stay hydrated
- Do not pull mask down or wear partially. Do not push back eye/face shield or goggles to rest on top of your head. Both actions increase risk of self-contamination.

GLOVE CONCERNS

Concern: *Should I be double gloving? Are two pairs of gloves better than one to protect me from blood and body fluids?*

Action: Gloves never take the place of hand hygiene!

- If gloves are not needed for Additional Precautions or to protect your hands from blood or body fluids, thorough hand hygiene is the best way to protect yourself.
- Wearing two pairs of gloves will not provide more protection versus wearing one pair of gloves and performing hand hygiene after removing them. Wearing gloves gives you a false sense of security. People who wear gloves when they are not required are more likely to wear them longer than they should and are less likely to take them off after they become contaminated. This can lead to contamination of the individual and their environment.
- People think if they wear two pairs of gloves, they can just remove the top pair after they become contaminated and there will be a clean pair underneath. Not true! In the process of removing gloves you risk contaminating the second pair of gloves (or your hands). Wear one pair of gloves and always perform hand hygiene after removing them.

MEDICAL FACE MASK CONCERNS

This section refers to medical face masks (procedure or surgical) and will be referred to as “mask(s)” in the section below

Concern: *I have difficulty breathing when wearing a mask.*

Action: If masks become wet, it can make it more difficult to breathe:

- Change mask when it becomes wet, damaged or soiled.

Concern: *Wearing a mask hurts my ears.*

Action: Prolonged pressure and friction around the ears can make wearing a mask uncomfortable. **Here are some tips and resources to help:**

- Refer to: PPE and Skin Related Issues Occupational Health or Designate Internal Process: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-ppe-and-skin-injuries-internal-oh-process.pdf> for PPE skin injury preventative measures.
- Wear ear protectors to relieve pressure on ears. Follow this guidance on the supply, disinfection and reuse of ear guards <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/ear-guards-supply-disinfection-reuse.pdf>.

Concern: *I don't feel safe reusing my mask.*

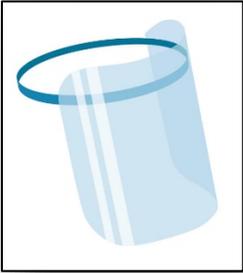
Action: Reuse of procedure/surgical masks is a deviation from usual IP&C Practices, which can make people uncomfortable. **The following are tips to make this process safer:**

- Removing and storing masks for reuse is recommended in a GREEN ZONE only. Refer to: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/extended-use-of-face-masks.pdf> and follow the guidance to avoid contamination and keep you safe.

- If you feel your mask has become contaminated or soiled, discard and put on a new mask.
- Do not touch your mask. The more you touch your mask to adjust it, the greater risk of contaminating it along with your hands. If you unintentionally touch your mask, perform hand hygiene and change your mask.

FACE AND EYE PROTECTION CONCERNS

Use face and eye protection per the PPE framework. They **must be employer approved and obtained through Logistics/MDA. Items brought in from another source and worn at work are not considered approved.** This section refers to the following available options for face and eye protection:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full face shield – easy to put on and remove. Provides coverage to the front and sides of the face. It should extend from above the brow to below the chin, and around to the temples but not impact the movement of the head. An option for wearing with prescription eye or reading glasses. A single-use full face shield can be worn continuously as part of universal PPE however, once removed, it cannot be reused and should be discarded or set aside if a method of reprocessing is in place. If a full face shield is manufactured as reusable, an approved process of cleaning, disinfecting and storage must be followed and facility approved disinfectant is to be used.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half face shields (re-usable frames and lens) as referred to in the SOP Disinfecting Eye Protection – easy to put on and remove. It should extend from the brow to the cheek bones. And wrap around to the temples. An option for wearing with prescription eye or reading glasses. Assess functional quality to ensure vision is still clear. A half face shield can be removed, cleaned, disinfected and stored for breaks and reused throughout the day as outlined in the SOP.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goggles – more of a challenge to put on and remove safely and easily. Goggles must fit snug to the face, with no gaps, even when wearing prescription eyeglasses. May be more time consuming and awkward to use with reading glasses if the glasses are not worn continuously. Meant to be reused. An approved process of cleaning, disinfecting and storage must be followed and a facility approved disinfectant is to be used.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety or trauma glasses – must fit snug to the face, with no gaps between the glasses and your face. Must provide protection from the brow bone to the cheek bone and wrap around to the temples. May be used with prescription eye or reading glasses only if identified as OTG safety glasses (over the glass) but must still fit snugly. Meant to be reused. An approved process of cleaning, disinfecting and storage must be followed and a facility approved disinfectant is to be used.
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Concern: *My half face shield or full face shield or goggles keep fogging up*

Action: Many times, lenses fog because the breath coming out of your mouth goes upwards towards your eye protection. Here are some steps to follow to try to prevent this from happening:

- *Mold your mask.* Make sure the moldable strip at the top of the mask has been molded closely to the bridge of your nose as this can help prevent your breath from travelling upwards. Tighten the mask around your face with the ties. If you have ear loops, consider using a mask holding device (which will give the back of your ears a break too!)
- Try a different type of half face shield or switch to a full face shield based on availability at your facility

Additional tips if you are using or reusing half face shields:

- Pull up your mask high over the bridge of your nose (make sure the mask still extends under your chin) and rest your half face shield over your mask
- After you remove your half face shield and disinfect it, wash with soap and water and allow to air dry. The soapy water creates a thin film that prevents fogging

Concern: *My half face shield keeps falling off*

Action: A half face shield that fits too loosely can begin to slide or fall off at inopportune times. Consider trying:

- Try a different type of half face shield or switch to a full face shield based on availability at your facility

Concern: *If I'm preparing medications in the med room, and having difficulty seeing due to glare, do I still need to wear half face shield or full face shield or goggles?*

Action: Staff and patient safety are priorities. Consider the following:

- If you are alone, or physically distanced (2 metre/6 feet) away from all other staff in the medication room, you may remove your half or full face shield or goggles and store according to <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/standard-operating-procedure-disinfecting-eye.pdf> or dispose, depending on type of protection used.
- **Do not remove if there is a risk of splash or spraying into mucous membranes**

- If you are not able to maintain physical distance (2 metre/6 feet) away from all other staff in the medication room, you must continue to wear your half or full face shield or goggles
- Where medical accommodation is required as a result of the above solutions not alleviating your concerns, OESH must be consulted. Approval must include an approved cleaning/disinfection plan reviewed by IP&C. Products used must be compatible with our [facility approved disinfectant](#) list.

Concern: *I am using eye protection - half face shield or full face shield or goggles and I need to use my reading glasses*

Action: People who need reading glasses can't wear them continuously under their eye protection. For this reason, using goggles is not be a convenient option. If goggles have been provided for use, talk with your manager about ordering another option (full face shield) for staff that wear reading glasses

- If available/possible, use a full face shield.
- With the face shield in place:
 - Remove your gloves (if wearing)
 - Perform hand hygiene
 - Get your reading glasses ready to put on, and hold one hand
 - With the other hand – touch only the edge of the half or full face shield close to where the head band attaches – flip up the shield and put on your reading glasses with other “clean” hand
 - Flip face shield down
 - Perform hand hygiene
 - Do the task you need your reading glasses for
 - Perform hand hygiene
 - Flip up the face shield as outlined above
 - Remove readers with other “clean” hand and place them in a secure spot
 - Flip down face shield
 - Perform hand hygiene

Concern: *I'm working on a GREEN ZONE, staff are all wearing masks, patients are asymptomatic, why do I need to wear a half face shield or full face shield or goggles?*

Action: Masks can provide a false sense of security; it is important to make sure your eyes are protected as well.

- Eyes are a mucous membrane. Any open/exposed mucous membrane (eye, nose mouth) allows an opening for a droplet to land and get into your body.
- If a patient is asymptomatic, you cannot be certain they aren't incubating the virus. Droplets aren't only expelled by coughing and sneezing, they can also be expelled through yelling, singing or even just speaking.

- A half or full face shield or goggles ensures better protection of your mucous membranes and discourages subconscious eye rubbing or touching. If you touch a contaminated surface then touch your eye you could become infected.
- Review Provincial Requirements for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to determine PPE required by situation/setting: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-provincial-ppe-requirements.pdf>

Concern: *I wear prescription eyewear and need to wear eye protection. How do I do this without impacting my vision?*

Action: Consider currently available options that don't interfere with visibility. Often the best fit over prescription eyewear is a full face shield. Where this has been trialed and not successful:

- Prescription eyewear can be considered but it has to meet the applicable CSA standard CAN/CSA-Z94.3-92 for healthcare environmental exposures. This must be assessed by OESH through the medical accommodation process