

COVID-19 & USE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released [guidelines](#) for the rational use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for COVID-19 in community and healthcare settings. Preventive and mitigation practices are key to hindering transmission, with the appropriate selection, use, removal and disposal of PPE an additional precautionary measure.

Transmission Risk



Based on available evidence COVID-19 is transmitted through close contact and droplets from infected persons or touching a contaminated surface.



The people most at risk are those in close contact with a COVID-19 patient or who care for COVID-19 patients.



Preventive and mitigation measures are key to hindering transmission.

Preventive Measures in the Community



Perform hand hygiene frequently using soap and water or an alcohol-based rub.



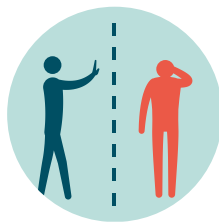
Avoid touching potential infection entry points including the eyes, nose and mouth.



Practice respiratory hygiene by coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow or tissue and then immediately disposing of the tissue.



Wear a medical mask if respiratory symptoms present and perform hand hygiene after removal.



Maintain a social distance of at least 1 meter from people with respiratory symptoms.

Equipment damage or breaches

If PPE is breached or damaged, the wearer should perform hand hygiene, remove the damaged PPE item, perform hand hygiene again and replace with new PPE. In the event of body fluid contact such as droplet exposure to the eyes or mouth, these safety protocols should be followed:

- 1 Immediately stop what you are doing.
- 2 Perform hand hygiene.
- 3 Flush the affected area with plenty of water.
- 4 Follow the established reporting practices and procedures of your workplace or healthcare institution.

WHO cautions against the overuse of PPE, which could have an impact on future supply. Observance of these guidelines should ensure rationalized use of PPE, safeguarding continuity of supply throughout this continually evolving international public health emergency.

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When and How to Use PPE

The right type of PPE to use will vary based on the risk of exposure, the setting, the type of personnel and the activity they are doing. Below is a chart based on WHO guidelines that shows the proper PPE for users in various applications. For additional details or for local guidance, please refer to the full document.

User	Application	Proper PPE to Use
Health Care Workers	Preliminary screening not involving direct contact	No PPE required. Minimum distance of at least 1 meter
	Physical examination of patient with respiratory symptoms	Medical Mask, Gown, Gloves, Eye Protection*
	Providing direct care to COVID-19 patients	Medical Mask, Gown, Gloves, Eye Protection*
	Aerosol-generating procedures performed on COVID-19 patients	N95 or FFP2 standard or equivalent respirators, Gown, Gloves, Eye Protection, Apron
	Providing direct care to a COVID-19 patient at home	Medical Mask, Gown, Gloves, Eye Protection
	Transporting suspected COVID-19 patients to the referral health care facility	Medical Mask, Gown, Gloves, Eye Protection
Patients with Respiratory Symptoms	Any area of an inpatient facility	Minimum distance of at least 1 meter. Medical Mask (if tolerated)
	Outpatient consultation rooms	Medical Mask (if tolerated)
	Waiting rooms	Medical Mask (if tolerated). Immediately move patient to an isolation room or separate area away from others. If this is not possible, spatial distance of at least 1 meter from other patients
	Home	Spatial distance of at least 1 meter. Medical Mask (if tolerated) except while sleeping
Home Caregivers	Entering the patient's room, but not providing direct care or assistance	Medical Mask†
	Providing direct care or when handling stool, urine, or waste from COVID-19 patient	Gloves, Medical Mask, Apron (if risk of splash)
Cleaners	Entering the room of COVID-19 patients	Medical Mask, Gown, Heavy-duty Gloves, Eye Protection (if risk of splash from organic materials or chemicals), Boots or Closed Work Shoes
	Entering a room after and between consultations with patients with respiratory symptoms	Medical Mask, Gown, Heavy-duty Gloves, Eye Protection (if risk of splash from organic materials or chemicals), Boots or Closed Work Shoes
	Cleaning areas where people with fevers are being screened or isolated	Medical Mask, Gown, Heavy-duty Gloves, Eye Protection (if risk of splash from organic materials or chemicals), Boots or Closed Work Shoes

* Recommended eye protection is goggles or a face shield.

† Due to international shortages on face masks, recommendations are evolving and readers should check for the latest recommendations from their countries.