

Personal Protective Equipment



March 31, 2020

Ensuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for health-care teams is an Island Health priority, and a pillar of a robust pandemic response plan. But just as important as supply, is our utilization of PPE using best practices. This memo contains clarification of the direction provided last week. The following is consistent with Infection Prevention and Control Standards and is intended to support staff safety in our hospitals, long-term care facilities and community settings, while also conserving PPE.

Determine if your patient/client/resident has respiratory symptoms, is suspected of having COVID-19 (awaiting lab results) or is confirmed to have COVID-19.

If yes, follow Infection Prevention and Control [Droplet Precautions](#) by donning PPE, which includes:

- a surgical mask
- eye protection
- gloves
- gown
- If doing an [Aerosol Generating Medical Procedure](#), wear an N95 mask
- PPE (including masks) should be removed after providing care to patients on droplet/airborne precautions, using appropriate doffing procedures.

We want to reinforce the importance of PPE conservation practices at this time, including, but not limited to:

- Minimize the number of clinicians providing direct care to a patient on isolation. This includes not having students and learners provide care to isolation patients.
- Review all equipment and supplies needed before entering the room or client home.
- Bundle tasks together to minimize trips into a patient room or home visits.
- If you have decided to use a mask for procedures in non-droplet isolation situations, keep using that mask for as long as possible until the mask is too damp, soiled, or damaged for effective droplet/airborne protection, or when you leave the care setting (i.e. unit, facility, patient home).
- N95 masks used for care of non-droplet/airborne precautions should not be discarded but rather be placed in the appropriate bin for reprocessing.
 - For Community settings, reprocessing is not available. Staff should continue to dispose of N95 masks as per normal disposal process.
- In acute care, use other conservation strategies available; i.e. extended IV tubing is now available to prevent entering patient room to manage IV pump settings.

These actions will support you and your colleagues in providing safe patient care, while supporting actions to effectively manage our PPE supply at site and health authority levels. Each of our facilities utilizing PPE have appropriate supply on site, with volumes based on utilization patterns. We are continuously monitoring volumes, and we are working with our provincial partners to increase PPE supplies, as well as working locally to find or develop innovative PPE solutions.

If you have questions please speak to your supervisor or contact your [IPC Practitioner](#).