

## **EOHHS Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** September 2020

This guidance is intended to provide staff with information about the types and use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in client settings.

PPE is specialized clothing or equipment worn by an employee for protection against infectious materials. PPE includes respirators, facemasks (surgical masks), gloves, eye protection (goggles, face shields, etc.), and gowns. While cloth face coverings are not classified as PPE, they serve as an effective alternative to facemasks for in-person contact with individuals who are not known or suspected to be COVID-19 positive, not known to have been exposed to COVID-19, and not symptomatic.

These items help prevent contact with infectious materials by creating a barrier between the staff and infectious materials.

PPE is not a substitute for other measures to prevent the spread of infection. The following practices should always be employed, when anticipating in-person contact with other individuals:

- Asking recommended COVID-19 screening questions
  - Has the individual(s) been diagnosed as COVID-19 positive?
  - Has the individual(s) been exposed to someone who is COVID-19 positive?
  - Is the individual(s) exhibiting symptoms that are consistent with COVID-19?
  - Has the individual(s) traveled internationally or from a non-exempt state (per Governor's COVID-19 Travel Order, issued 8/1/20) in the last 14 days?
  - Does the individual(s) have any high-risk considerations?
- Maintaining 6 feet of distance from other persons, whenever possible
- Wearing of facemasks or cloth face coverings
- Frequent hand washing with soap and warm water or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer

### **Types of PPE to Use and When**

Decisions regarding when and which types of PPE should be worn are determined by the type of in-person contact/interaction staff can reasonably expect to have with an individual(s) and what this individual(s)' known or suspected COVID-19 status might be.

The various types of in-person contact staff have largely fall into two main categories. These categories and the PPE items associated with each are as follows:

#### **1) No Known or Suspected Covid-19 Exposure**

When having in-person contact with an individual who has no known or suspected exposure to COVID-19, who is not symptomatic, and who does not present behavioral risks (spitting, biting, etc.) that would increase risk of exposure, the following PPE is required:

- Facemask (a cloth face covering can also be used under these conditions)

- Staff should clean their hands with soap and warm water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer, both before and after the in-person contact.
- Gloves are not considered necessary, as long as there is access to soap and running water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer. *One exception to this guidance is if staff anticipate contact with an individual's bodily fluids, such as changing diapers, assisting a client in cleaning their nose or face, or treating an injury, cut or scrape with blood or secretions.*
- Eye protection (goggles/face shields) and gowns are not considered necessary under these conditions.

## 2) COVID-19 Positive or Exposure Risk

When having in-person contact with an individual and **any of the following conditions are present**, additional PPE must be worn:

- There is indication that someone is COVID-19 positive
- There has been exposure to someone who is COVID-19 positive
- Someone has symptoms of COVID-19
- Someone presents additional behavioral risks (spitting, biting, etc.)

In these instances the following PPE is required:

- Facemasks
  - ***Cloth face coverings should not be worn under these conditions. Cloth face coverings should only be considered for in-person contact with individuals who are not known or suspected to be COVID-19 positive, not known to have been exposed to COVID-19, not symptomatic, and do not exhibit behavioral risks (spitting, biting, etc.).***
- Gloves
- Eye protection (goggles or face shields)
- Gowns or another layer of clothing/garments that can be changed or removed after the in-person contact occurs
- N95 respirators may be appropriate for use by staff and when transporting a COVID-19 positive individual in a vehicle where there is concern about exposure to a passenger's respiratory droplets. In this situation, per CDC guidance, a facemask is considered an acceptable alternative at all times.

Note: If transporting a COVID-19 positive individual, an N95 respirator or facemask should be provided to the individual being transported as well. Staff should also create as much distance as possible between those in the vehicle and open the windows if the circumstances allow.

*See Appendix 1 for additional information on the proper use of N95 respirators.*

## **What to Know About Each PPE Item**

### **FACEMASKS AND CLOTH FACE COVERINGS**

Wearing a facemask/cloth face covering has been recommended by the CDC and World Health Organization (WHO) as a way to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

There are a variety of types of facemasks and cloth face coverings that can be used by staff, clients, children, families, and members of the community. Two of the main types include:

- Facemasks (surgical masks; single use/disposable PPE)
- Cloth face coverings (re-usable; not classified as PPE)

Facemasks or cloth face coverings must be worn by adults and children older than 2 years during all types of in-person contact, except in situations when wearing a mask would be damaging to a person’s health or, if a person is developmentally unable to use a facemask or cloth face covering. These situations may include, but are not limited to:

- Children under the age of 2 years
- Individuals who cannot safely and appropriately wear, remove, and handle facemasks or cloth face coverings
- Individuals who have difficulty breathing with the face covering or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove facemasks or cloth face coverings without assistance
- Individuals with severe cognitive or respiratory impairments that may have a hard time tolerating a facemask or cloth face covering
- Individuals where the only option for a facemask or cloth face covering presents a potential choking or strangulation hazard
- Individuals who cannot breathe safely with a facemask or cloth face covering, including those who require supplemental oxygen to breathe
- Individuals who, due to a behavioral health diagnosis or an intellectual impairment, are unable to wear a facemask or cloth face covering safely
- Individuals who need to communicate with people who rely upon lip reading. Facemasks with clear plastic windows can be used to facilitate lip reading.

**How to Put on Facemasks and Cloth Face Coverings**

All facemasks or cloth face coverings should fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face, be secured with ties or ear loops, and allow for breathing without restriction.

- What does it mean to fit “snugly”? Facemasks or cloth face coverings should not be so tight that you see redness or deep lines in your face
- There should be full cupping around nose and chin with minimal space or opening on the sides

<b>Facemask (Disposable)</b>	<b>Cloth Face Covering</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching the facemask</li> <li>• Remove mask from the box/package and make sure there are no obvious tears or holes in either side of the facemask</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching the cloth face covering</li> <li>• Cover mouth and nose with cloth face covering and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the cloth face covering</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine which side of the facemask is the top (the side of the mask that has a stiff bendable edge is the top and is meant to mold to the shape of your nose)</li> <li>• Determine which side of the facemask is the front- the colored side of the mask (often blue or yellow) is usually the front and should face away from you, while the white side touches your face</li> <li>• Hold the facemask by each loop and place around your ears</li> <li>• Mold or pinch the stiff edge to the shape of your nose</li> <li>• Pull the bottom of the facemask over your mouth and chin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For cloth face coverings with ear loops: hold the cloth face covering by each loop and place around your ears. For cloth face coverings with ties: Bring the face covering to your nose level and place the ties around the back of the head and secure with a bow. One tie goes above the ear and one goes below</li> <li>• Avoid touching the cloth face covering while using it; if you do, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water</li> <li>• Replace the cloth face covering with a new one as soon as it is damp</li> </ul>
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**How to Remove Face Masks and Cloth Face Coverings**

Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching the facemask or cloth face covering. Avoid touching the front of the facemask or cloth face covering.

**Facemasks or cloth face coverings with ear loops:** Hold both of the ear loops and gently lift and remove the mask.

**Facemasks or cloth face coverings with ties:** Untie the bottom bow first and then untie the top bow. Pull the facemask or cloth face covering away from you as the ties are loosened.

**How to Dispose of or Re-use Facemasks and Cloth Face Coverings**

**Facemasks:** Discard single-use facemasks in a waste container after each in-person contact.

- In times of supply shortage there are CDC recommended strategies for optimizing the supply of facemasks, including implementing the limited re-use of facemasks.

*See Appendix 2 for more information*

**Cloth face coverings:** Place cloth face coverings in appropriate container to launder. Cloth face coverings may be worn for multiple in-person contacts but must be laundered at the end of each day before re-use.

**For both facemasks and cloth face coverings:** Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after you have disposed of a facemask or put a reusable cloth face covering away for cleaning.

**Facemask and Cloth**

Some types of facemasks or cloth face coverings are not effective at preventing the spread of COVID-19, studies show that bandanas and neck

**Face Covering Alternatives NOT Recommended for Use**      fleeces (also called gaiters or buffs) may not work well at blocking droplets from your mouth and nose.  
If you have a mask with a vent or valve, check the inside of the mask. If you see fabric inside that covers the valve or vent, then the mask is OK to wear. If you see the vent or valve from the inside of the mask, you should not wear the mask because droplets from your mouth and nose can pass through the valve as you exhale

**Wearing a face shield alone** is not considered an acceptable alternative to wearing a facemask or cloth face covering, as it does not fit snugly around the nose and chin with minimal space or opening on the sides. Face shields should always be worn in conjunction with a facemask or cloth face covering.

*See Appendix 2 for additional information on the proper use of facemasks.*

## **GLOVES**

Gloves protect you against contact with infectious materials. However, once gloves are contaminated, if not used properly, gloves can become a means for spreading infectious materials to yourself and others.

In most situations, wearing gloves is not necessary. The best way to protect yourself from germs is to regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Gloves should be worn when cleaning workspaces/surfaces (office, vehicle, visiting rooms, etc.), especially any high-touch areas. Gloves should also be worn when anticipating contact with an individual's bodily fluids, such as in the following situations:

- Changing diapers
- Assisting an individual to clean their nose or face
- Treating an injury (cut or scrape with blood or secretions)

**How to Put on Gloves**      To put on gloves:

- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer; dry them well before touching the gloves.
- Select the size glove that best fits you.
- Insert each hand into the appropriate glove and adjust as needed for comfort and dexterity.
- If you are wearing a disposable gown, tuck the gown cuffs securely under each glove. This provides a continuous barrier protection for your skin.
- If gloves become torn or heavily soiled during the performance of a task, they should be changed for a new pair.

## **How to Remove Gloves**

Disposable gloves should never be washed and used again. They should be thrown away after each use.

To remove gloves:

- Using one gloved hand, grasp the outside of the opposite glove near the wrist.
- Pull and peel the glove away from the hand. The glove should now be turned inside-out with the contaminated side now on the inside.
- Hold the removed glove in the opposite gloved hand.
- Slide one or two fingers of the ungloved hand under the wrist of the remaining glove.
- Peel glove off from the inside, creating a bag for both gloves.
- Discard gloves in waste container and clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.

## **EYE PROTECTION (Goggles or Face Shields)**

Goggles and face shields help to prevent splashes or sprays from reaching susceptible mucous membranes of the face. They should be used during activities where prolonged face-to-face or close contact with a potentially infectious individual (COVID-19 positive, suspected positive, or symptomatic) is unavoidable.

Face shields may also be considered for use, along with facemasks, to provide additional protection in certain scenarios with individuals that have no known or suspected exposure to COVID-19, are not symptomatic, and do not present behavioral risks. For example, while supervising an individual in a hospital emergency department for an extended period of time.

Goggles provide protection to the eyes; a face shield will offer protection to the entire face. When goggles or face shields are used, they should always be worn in conjunction with a facemask. As noted above, wearing a face shield alone is not considered an acceptable alternative to wearing a facemask or cloth face covering, as it does not fit snugly around the nose and chin with minimal space or opening on the sides.

## **How to Put on Goggles and Face Shields**

To put on goggles or a face shield:

- Place over face and eyes and adjust to fit and secure with the attached earpieces or headband.
- Goggles should fit snugly over and around the eyes or personal prescription lenses.
- Face shields should cover the forehead, extend below the chin, and wrap around the side of the face.

It is important that these items fit comfortably to avoid touching or readjustment during in-person contact.

## **How to Remove**

To remove goggles or a face shield:

- Grasp the “clean” ear or head pieces and lift away from face.

## **Goggles and Face Shields**

- If goggles or face shields are reusable, place them in a designated receptacle for subsequent cleaning/disinfecting.
- If goggles or face shields are disposable, discard them in a waste container.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer after discarding (disposable) or putting away (re-usable) goggles or face shields.

## **How to Clean, Disinfect, and Re-Use Goggles and Face Shields**

Re-usable goggles and face shields should be removed and cleaned/disinfected after any prolonged face-to-face or close contact with a potentially infectious individual or if they become visibly soiled or difficult to see through.

Adhere to recommended manufacturer instructions for cleaning and disinfection. When manufacturer instructions for cleaning and disinfection are unavailable, consider:

- While wearing gloves, carefully wipe the inside, followed by the outside of the face shield or goggles using a clean cloth saturated with neutral detergent solution or a cleaner wipe.
- Then, carefully wipe the outside of the face shield or goggles using a wipe or clean cloth saturated with EPA-registered disinfectant solution.
- Wipe the outside of face shield or goggles with clean water or alcohol to remove residue.
- Fully dry (air dry or use clean absorbent towels).
- Remove gloves and clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Goggles and face shields are now ready for re-use.

## **GOWNS**

Gowns are used when contact between clothing or skin with an individual's blood or bodily fluids is reasonably expected.

### **How to Put on Gowns (disposable)**

Gowns should:

- Cover the torso, the legs to the knees, the arms to end of wrist and wrap around the back.
- Allow free movement with sleeves that fit snugly at the wrist.
- Go on with the opening at the back, then fasten around the back of the neck and the waist.

### **How to Remove Gowns (disposable)**

Gowns should always be disposed of after each use. To remove:

- Unfasten gown and pull it away from neck and shoulders, touching inside of gown only.
- Turn gown inside out and fold or roll into a bundle and discard in a waste container.

- Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer, after you have disposed of gown.

**Substitute Option** If a disposable gown is not available, an outer layer of clothing/garments (long sleeve t-shirt, poncho, coveralls, light sweat suit, etc.) can also be used as an effective substitute.

After use during an in-person contact with COVID-19 positive, suspected positive, or symptomatic individuals, these items must be:

- Removed and discarded in a waste container (if disposable).
- Placed in a dedicated receptacle for contaminated materials (if reusable) and laundered before being re-used in any other in-person contact.

### Order of Steps to Follow When Putting on and Taking off PPE

The nature of the in-person contact will determine which PPE items you use (see “Types of PPE to Use and When” above). The steps outlined below are listed in the order staff should follow when putting on and taking off multiple items of PPE.

Putting On (Donning)	Taking Off (Doffing)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify and gather the proper PPE items needed</li> <li>2. Perform hand hygiene using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer</li> <li>3. Put on isolation gown</li> <li>4. Put on facemask</li> <li>5. Put on goggles or face shield</li> <li>6. Put on gloves</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remove gloves</li> <li>2. Remove gown</li> <li>3. Perform hand hygiene, using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer</li> <li>4. Remove goggles/face shield</li> <li>5. Remove facemask</li> <li>6. Perform hand hygiene using soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer</li> </ol>

*When wearing a facemask or N95 respirator, make sure to select the proper eye protection (goggles, face shields, etc.) to ensure that the facemask/respirator does not interfere with the correct positioning of the eye protection and the eye protection does not affect the fit or seal of the facemask/respirator.*

*See Appendix 3 for resources on donning and doffing.*

**Proper Storage of PPE** Where PPE is provided, adequate storage facilities for PPE must be made available for when it is not in use.

- All PPE must be stored in a clean and sanitary condition ready for use. Storage may be simple, e.g., a case for safety glasses, a container in a vehicle, or zip-lock bags on a designated shelf.
- Storage should be adequate to protect PPE from contamination, loss, damage, water or sunlight.
- Proper storage often requires a dry and clean place that is not subject to temperature extremes.



- When re-usable PPE becomes contaminated/dirty during use, a storage area separate from the clean, unused PPE should be identified until these contaminated items can be cleaned or disinfected.
- Limited re-use of facemasks is the practice of using the same facemask by one staff person for multiple encounters with different individual clients but removing it after each encounter. When implementing the limited re-use of facemasks:
  - Staff should leave the area of close proximity to other individual(s), if they need to remove the facemask.
  - Facemasks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage.
  - The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container.
  - *In times of supply shortage, there are CDC recommended strategies for optimizing the supply of facemasks, including implementing the limited re-use of facemasks. See Appendix 2 for more information.*
- When opening, handling, and distributing PPE from its packaging, it is important for staff to first clean their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer. Gloves may also be worn if soap and water or hand sanitizer is not available.

## **Maintaining PPE**

- An effective system of PPE maintenance is essential to make sure this equipment continues to provide the degree of protection for which it is designed. Therefore, the manufacturer's maintenance schedule (including recommended replacement periods and shelf lives) must always be followed.
- Inspect PPE before each use. With most PPE, it only takes a few minutes to inspect the equipment for any breaks, tears, and visible signs of stress or damage
- Employees must take reasonable care of any PPE provided to them and not carry out any enhanced maintenance, unless trained and authorized to do so.
- Acceptable maintenance for untrained staff may include cleaning, examination, replacement, and light repairs.

## Appendix 1 – How to Put On, Remove, and Dispose of N95 Respirators

### N95 Respirators

A respirator is a tightfitting personal protective device that is worn on the face or head and covers at least the nose and mouth. Respirators filter out at least 95% of particles in the air and are used to reduce the wearer's risk of inhaling hazardous large and small airborne particles (including infectious agents), gases, or vapors.

Not everyone is able to wear a respirator due to medical conditions that may be made worse when breathing through a respirator. Before using a respirator or getting fit-tested, workers must have a medical evaluation to make sure that they are able to wear a respirator safely.

#### How to Put on N95 Respirators

- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching the respirator.
- Remove respirator from the box/packaging and make sure there are no obvious tears or holes in either side of the respirator.
- Determine which side of the respirator is the top- the side of the respirator that has a stiff bendable edge is the top and is meant to mold to the shape of your nose.
- Cup the respirator in your hand, with the nosepiece at your fingertips, allowing the headbands to hang freely below your hand.
- Position the respirator under your chin with the nosepiece up.
- Pull the top strap over your head resting it high at the top back of your head- pull the bottom strap over your head and position it around the neck below the ears.
- Place your fingertips from both hands at the top of the metal nosepiece- using two hands, mold the nose area to the shape of your nose by pushing inward while moving your fingertips down both sides of the nose piece.

**Please Note:** Pinching the nosepiece using one hand may result in improper fit and less effective respirator performance. Always use two hands

#### How to Perform a Fit Check on N95 Respirators

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for wearing a respirator. Perform a fit check to ensure there is a good seal against the skin prior to each use. To check the respirator-to-face seal:

- Place both hands completely over the respirator and exhale- be careful not to disturb the position of the respirator.
- If air leaks around nose, readjust the nosepiece as described in bullet 7 above.
- If air leaks at the respirator edges, work the straps back along the sides of your head.

**How to  
Remove  
N95  
Respirators**

Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before touching the N95 respirator. Avoid touching the front of the respirator, then:

- Tilt your head forward.
- Then, use two hands to grab the bottom strap of the respirator.
- Pull bottom strap of respirator to the sides, then over your head.
- Next, use both hands to grab the upper strap, pull to the sides, then over your head.
- Keep tension on the upper strap as you remove it, which will let the mask fall forward.

**How to  
Dispose of  
N95  
Respirators**

Discard single-use N95 respirators in a waste container after each in-person contact *and* clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer after you have disposed of a respirator.

## Appendix 2 – Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of Facemasks

In times of supply shortage, there are CDC recommended strategies for optimizing the supply of facemasks. These strategies include:

- Using facemasks beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life
  - Check the packaging to determine whether there is a date beyond which use of the facemask is not recommended (If there is no date available on the facemask label or packaging, the manufacturer may be contacted for further recommendations).
  - The user should visually inspect the product prior to use and, if there are concerns (such as degraded materials or visible tears), discard the product.
- Implementing limited re-use of facemasks
  - Limited re-use of facemasks is the practice of using the same facemask by one staff person for multiple encounters with different individual clients but removing it after each encounter.
  - Care should be taken to ensure that the staff person does not touch outer surfaces of the mask during its use and that mask removal and replacement be done in a careful and deliberate manner.
  - The facemask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
  - Not all facemasks can be re-used, facemasks that fasten via ties may not be able to be undone without tearing.
  - Facemasks with elastic ear hooks may be more suitable for re-use.
  - Staff should leave the area of close proximity to other individual(s), if they need to remove the facemask.
  - Facemasks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage.
  - The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container.
- Prioritizing facemasks for selected activities:
  - Where prolonged face-to-face or close contact with a potentially infectious individual is unavoidable.
  - Where splashes and sprays are anticipated.
  - Involving interactions with individuals who present additional behavioral risks (spitting, biting, etc.)
- Staff use of cloth face coverings.
  - In settings where facemasks are not available, staff might use cloth face coverings during contact with individuals with COVID-19 as a last resort.
  - However, caution should be exercised when considering this option and cloth face coverings should ideally be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face.

## Appendix 3 – Links to Additional Online Resources and Videos

### DOCUMENTS

- **Face Mask Do's and Don'ts:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/hcp/fs-facemask-dos-donts.pdf>
- **Order of Steps to Put on PPE (“Donning”) and Remove PPE (“Doffing”):** <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppe-sequence.pdf>

### VIDEOS

- On (“Donning”) Masks - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OABvzu9e-hw>
- Putting On (“Donning”) PPE - <https://youtu.be/H4jQUBAIBrl>
- Taking Off (“Doffing”) PPE - <https://youtu.be/PQxOc13DxvQ>