
SUBJECT: Updated PPE Information for Health System Partners
Date: March 30, 2020
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To: Primary Care Providers, Emergency Departments, Hospitals, Infection Control Practitioners
From: Dr. Nicola Mercer, Medical Officer of Health and CEO

COVID-19 Testing Update

Evidence-based guidance for the use and conservation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is critical for healthcare workers responding to COVID-19. This Advisory summarizes recommendations from an Ontario Health guidance document. Some of this advice deviates from previous practice in order to conserve supplies of masks. Please read the entire document, which is available on our website (COVID-19 Information for Healthcare Providers).

Background

There are significant provincial supply constraints for many items of PPE, including gloves, gowns, surgical masks and N95 masks. Appropriate stewardship of PPE requires consideration of the safety of health care workers combined with strategies to both reduce inappropriate use and conserve supply. Significant efforts are underway to try and source additional PPE supplies provincially and access existing community sources. Large provincial orders have been purchased but not yet delivered. Despite these efforts PPE remains a significant concern for all healthcare providers.

PPE Guidance Exerpted from Ontario Health Document:

Primary Care (including walk-in clinics), Outpatient and Ambulatory Settings

- When caring for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 healthcare workers should follow droplet/contact precautions (surgical/procedure mask, isolation gown, gloves and eye protection).
- *Please see advice below on how to conserve surgical masks.*
- Patients suspected of, or confirmed to have COVID-19, who are waiting to be seen should don surgical masks and maintain a 2-metre social distance from others.

Long-Term Care Facilities

- When caring for individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 healthcare workers should follow droplet/contact precautions.
- *Please see advice below on how to conserve surgical masks.*
- Healthcare workers providing CPAP and BiPAP (for obstructive sleep apnea) and/or open suctioning to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 resident should don an N95 respirator, gown, gloves and eye protection.

COVID-19 Assessment Centres

- If you are assessing (+/- obtaining nasopharyngeal swabs) patients with COVID-19 symptoms you **do not require N-95 respirators**.
- *Please see advice below on how to conserve surgical masks.*

Inpatient Facilities (Acute Care Hospitals, Complex Continuing Care Units, EDs)

- When caring for individuals with suspect or confirmed COVID-19 healthcare workers should follow droplet/contact precautions.
- Use an N95 mask for aerosol-generating medical procedures which include:
 - Endotracheal intubation, extubation, and related procedures
 - Tracheostomy procedures (e.g., open suctioning, removal)
 - Open airway suctioning
 - Surgery and autopsy, especially when using high speed devices
 - Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (this is considered a high-risk procedure)
 - Tracheotomy
 - High frequency oscillating ventilation
 - Bronchoscopy (Diagnostic or Therapeutic)
 - Sputum induction (Diagnostic or Therapeutic)
 - Non-invasive positive pressure ventilation (CPAP, BiPAP)
 - CPAP/BiPAP for obstructive sleep apnea
 - High flow oxygen therapy
- Avoid aerosol-generating medical procedures in suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients where possible.

General Guidelines to Conserve Surgical/Procedural Masks:

- A surgical mask can be used over the course of many patients.
- Conserve your mask for as long as possible, but once wet, damaged, soiled, or removed, you should immediately dispose of the mask. Take extra care when removing this mask as this is when self-contamination may occur.
- Don a new mask for your next set of patient encounters, extending its use for as long as possible. In some circumstances this may necessitate more than 2 masks/shift.
- Leave the patient care area to remove the facemask and perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- Take care not to touch your facemask, and if you do perform hand hygiene.

References

Ontario. Ministry of Health. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) use during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Recommendations on the use and conservation of PPE from Ontario Health. 2020 March 25.

For more information, refer to contact or website:

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