

Conservation and disposal of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for non-healthcare providers during COVID-19 pandemic

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When is PPE required?

For non-healthcare settings the use of PPE should be considered based on a risk assessment of the task, the individual and environment. Any Government of Ontario guidance documents for your specific sector should be followed. Public Health Ontario has developed a [Technical Brief](#) outlining minimum expectations for PPE for care of individuals with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. Ontario Health has developed documents on the [use and conservation](#) of PPE and [optimizing the supply](#) of PPE.

Why is it critical that we conserve PPE?

With the projected increase in COVID-19 cases and the duration of the pandemic response, there is a real risk to supply chains of PPE and if we do not conserve PPE now, we will face shortages when we need it most.

How can we conserve and reuse surgical/procedure masks?

A surgical/procedure mask can be used over the course of many patients/clients without removing the mask between client encounters. Conserve your mask for as long as possible. The mask must be discarded if it becomes visibly soiled, makes contact with a client, or once it becomes very moist such that the integrity becomes compromised.

How can we conserve and reuse gowns?

Switch to reusable isolation gown options wherever possible, including cloth isolation gowns and reusable waterproof gowns. As a last resort, and if an organization's supply allows, reusable surgical gowns can be used.

How can we conserve and reuse eye protection?

Switch to reusable eye protection options including reusable goggles and reusable face shields wherever possible. 3D-printed face shields that meet the standards set out by

Health Canada are an appropriate alternative to traditional face shields for eye protection.

How should PPE be discarded?

See [recommended steps](#) for taking off PPE.

Gloves

Care should be taken when removing gloves to prevent self-contamination.

Medical gloves should be changed between every patient encounter and disposed of. Gloves should be discarded into a plastic lined waste container with a lid before disposing with regular waste. Perform hand hygiene after discarding gloves.

Gowns

Care should be taken when removing isolation or surgical gowns to prevent self-contamination.

Disposable gowns should be discarded into a plastic lined waste container with a lid before disposing with regular waste. Perform hand hygiene after discarding gown.

Reusable gowns can be safely laundered according to routine processes. Organizations should clearly date and label a receptacle with a plastic liner and lid to collect reusable gowns for laundering. The reprocessing of disposable isolation gowns is not recommended.

Eye protection

Care should be taken when removing eye protection to prevent self-contamination. Perform hand hygiene before removing eye protection. Handle the arms of goggles or sides or back of face shield as the front of eye protection is considered contaminated.

Disposable eye protection should be discarded into a plastic lined waste container with a lid before disposing with regular waste. Perform hand hygiene after discarding eye protection.

Reusable eye protection must be cleaned and disinfected using standard methods for hard plastic surfaces. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and cleaning of reusable face shields and consider assigning the face shield to a single user to reduce

the risk of transmission between workers. Cleaning of face shields should focus on the area most likely to be contaminated, which is the outer surface of the shield.

Masks

Care should be taken when removing masks to prevent self-contamination. Perform hand hygiene before removing mask. Handle the mask only by the strings/ties.

Surgical/procedure masks should be discarded into a plastic lined waste container with a lid before disposing with regular waste. **It is no longer recommended that organizations collect and store surgical/procedure masks for future reprocessing.** Perform hand hygiene after discarding mask.

If applicable, organizations should collect and store N95 masks for potential reprocessing. Clearly date and label a lidded receptacle lined with a biohazard bag to collect N95 masks for potential reprocessing. Do not use the mask receptacle for any other types of PPE.

How should PPE waste be disposed of?

For all types of PPE:

- PPE waste shall be placed in appropriate containers at the point-of-care/use as described below for each item.
- Do not double-bag waste unless the first bag becomes stretched or damaged, or when waste has spilled on the exterior.
- Close waste bags when three-quarters full and tie in a manner that prevents contents from escaping.
- Remove waste to locked storage areas at frequent intervals with access limited to authorized staff.
- You should have a waste management program that is compliant with current legislation and national standards.

How should other contaminated waste be disposed of?

All used disposable contaminated items (e.g. mop heads, cloths, wipes) should be placed in a plastic lined waste container with a lid before disposing with regular waste. Reusable cleaning items can be washed using regular laundry soap and hot water (60-90°C).

References

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