



# Coronavirus COVID-19

BC Centre for Disease Control | BC Ministry of Health



## HOW YOU CAN SLOW THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

Take care of others by taking care of yourself.

Wash your hands, don't touch your face, and stay home if you are sick.

Stay at Home and Physically Distance

Stay at home whenever you can. Maintain 2 meters distance from those outside of your household.

BULLETIN – March 28, 2020

## PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) ETHICAL GUIDANCE: STATUS FOR HEALTH AUTHORITIES

In the context of the province's response to COVID-19, it is essential that we keep our health care workers healthy, safe, and able to work to provide care and service in all settings. The care and attention given to personal protection equipment (PPE) and infection prevention has become our best way of helping keep our health care workers safe. Safety of our health care workers is critical in our response to the pandemic, and we need to manage and monitor equipment supply so that every worker has the right supply at the right time.

Recognizing that there are varying levels of PPE across the system and throughout regions, clinical and ethicist leaders throughout the province have developed a primary framework to assist in ensuring health care providers have access to the PPE they need to be and feel safe, while conserving and managing BC's critical PPE supply stocks. The BC's *Emergency Prioritization in a Pandemic: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Allocation Framework* (the PPE Framework) was distributed to Health Authorities on March 25, 2020 and was in effect immediately.

### WHAT HEALTH CARE WORKERS CAN DO TO PROTECT THEMSELVES

PPE is just one part of BC's comprehensive, provincial approach for protecting health care workers, patients, and the public from COVID-19 transmission. The PPE Allocation Framework is your guide to an ethical strategy – based on our current evidence and knowledge – for prioritizing PPE among health care workers at highest risk. This strategy is intended to help manage the provincially available PPE supply while keeping all health care workers healthy and safe.

Health care workers must engage in a **full PPE risk and point of care assessment** for every patient or client interaction. Routine, diligent **hand hygiene** with plain soap (or when not possible using an alcohol-based hand rub) is always essential but is especially important when donning and doffing PPE.

If a health care worker is expected to have direct physical contact with patients who are suspected or known cases of COVID-19 or have respiratory symptoms, they are strongly advised to wear a surgical or procedural mask, eye protection, gloves, and gown. PPE should be worn throughout shift only changing when absolutely necessary, for example when items are damaged or visibly soiled. Gloves can be changed between patients or clients and hand washing is required when taking off and putting on gloves.

In keeping with previous guidance, N95 respirators **are only to be used** for aerosol generating medical procedures and in accordance with the recent Policy Communique

For all health care staff with direct patient or client contact we recommend changing gloves between patients or clients and practicing good hand hygiene between patients or clients.

If health care workers have direct patient contact with patients without COVID-19 or respiratory symptoms, they can wear PPE, but must follow the guidance on extended use eye protection (face shield or goggles), surgical or procedural masks, and assess the need for the use of a gown. Equipment should be changed if leaving the care area (e.g., going on a break). Good hand hygiene must be practiced during donning and doffing (removing) PPE.

Actively mitigating and managing PPE supply is an ongoing function in our health care system and remains a priority focus during the province's response efforts to COVID-19. Every approach to increase our supply of PPE is being pursued.

These recommendations will be adjusted periodically to reflect changes to our PPE supply and the provincial COVID-19 status. We need health care workers to be protected but we also need to ensure efficient and effective use of our PPE stocks. We are just at the beginning of the outbreak epidemiological curve, and PPE must be available for healthcare workers at greatest risk throughout the pandemic.

### **The PPE Allocation Framework**

The PPE framework was developed following discussions with clinical experts, public health experts, clinical ethicists, is endorsed by the Provincial Health Officer and approved by the Ministry of Health. The framework's guidance strategies were developed to protect health care workers in a time of high demand for our PPE supply and may be adapted over time. The PPE supply will continue to be monitored and any direction reassessed in accordance with our associated stage of supply. We are aware that the availability of some types of PPE equipment are very limited. Conservation measures are critical to ensure we protect health care workers and new directions will be provided as required.

Work is underway on enhancing the PPE allocation framework for home and community settings, including supporting community physicians and nurse practitioners.

### **Supply Management and Procurement**

The Ministry of Health and PHSA Supply Chain, our central, provincial purchasing and procurement organization, are working diligently to ensure that medical supplies are being managed and shared across the health care system, and prioritizing distribution to ensure availability in the most critical situations.

**It is vitally important that these approaches are adhered to so we can keep our health care workers safe and healthy during this time of unprecedented demand on our supply of PPE.**