

Personal protective equipment

Information guide for clinicians

Note: This document is intended to be a guide only and should be read in conjunction with local COVID-19, PPE and infection management documents. If you are unsure, please contact your local Health Emergency Operations Centre (HEOC), infection management team, or email FrontlineCOVIDAdvice@health.qld.gov.au.

Use of personal protective equipment

- Advice regarding the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) in Queensland with regards to COVID-19 is based on national and international guidelines and endorsed by the Statewide Infection Clinical Network.
- As knowledge about COVID-19 is continually evolving these guidelines are regularly reviewed and updated as required.
- Printed copies of all COVID-19 PPE guidelines are uncontrolled. Current versions are available on the following websites:
 - <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/novel-coronavirus-qld-clinicians/personal-protective-equipment-ppe>
 - <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/novel-coronavirus-qld-clinicians/public-health.-laboratory-testing-and-infection-control-information>
- There are two levels of transmission-based precautions recommended: droplet plus contact precautions or airborne plus contact precautions (the latter for aerosol generating procedures).
- Healthcare workers must be trained in the application and removal of P2 and N95 respirators to ensure a suitable fit.
- Fit checks ensure the respirator is sealed over the bridge of the nose and mouth with an airtight protective seal.
- PPE is a precious resource and requires ongoing stewardship. Please ensure you are using the correct PPE for the clinical setting in which you are working.
- Skin irritation and pressure injuries can result from prolonged used of PPE, particularly along the bridge of the nose, cheek bones and above the ears. [These tips](#) are recommended to help avoid injury.

What PPE do I wear and when?

- The [Interim Infection Control Guidelines](#) were updated on 23 August 2020 to include [PPE escalation for Healthcare Facilities](#). This document outlines the recommended PPE escalation according to risk of unexpected COVID-19 infections in patients or healthcare workers.
- As the current risk of unexpected COVID-19 infections in hospital patients or healthcare workers in the [Greater Brisbane Area](#) has been assessed to be **low-moderate**, universal masking (with flat surgical mask) is recommended for all patients, visitors and staff in the Greater Brisbane Area.
- This advice applies to all Queensland Health facilities and is also strongly recommended for all other healthcare providers in the Greater Brisbane Area (e.g. general practice, private hospitals, community care etc.).

- The PPE advice for Queensland Ambulance Service follows this guidance and paramedics will continue to wear appropriate PPE for all patient interactions in the Greater Brisbane Area.
- [PPE escalation for Healthcare Facilities](#) outlines additional PPE requirements when caring for **suspected / probable / confirmed COVID-19 patients** as defined in the Communicable Diseases Network of Australia (CDNA) [Series of National Guidelines](#) (SoNG).
- Practically these will be patients who meet the current clinical criteria of COVID-19 (i.e. fever ($\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$) or history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills) OR acute respiratory infection (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, sore throat) OR loss of smell or loss of taste).
- Please note that contact precautions (gown or apron and gloves) are no longer required for care of **non-COVID patients** (patients who don't meet the CDNA criteria) in emergency departments in Greater Brisbane.
- The [PPE escalation for Healthcare Facilities](#) also provides advice to healthcare workers and patients outside the Greater Brisbane Area. Currently the risk of unexpected COVID-19 infections in hospital patients or healthcare workers in these regions is considered to be **low**.
- This advice will be reviewed regularly and modified as required. For further information please refer to the above links, consult your Health Emergency Operations Centre (HEOC) or email FrontlineCOVIDAdvice@health.qld.gov.au.
- These recommendations are aligned with [Infection Control Expert Group](#) and [World Health Organization](#) guidelines.

Advice for staff working in HHS administrative facilities without patient contact – on and off campus

- Health staff working in facilities in the Greater Brisbane Area should wear flat surgical masks at all times when 1.5 metre physical distancing cannot be maintained. This may include shared workspaces, meetings, in elevators, kitchens and other areas where distancing cannot be maintained.
- Staff may remove their mask in their own workspace only if 1.5 metre physical distancing can be maintained.
- In the HHSs currently affected by community transmission (West Moreton, Children's Health Queensland, Metro North, Metro South and Mater Health Services), wearing masks will protect staff from other staff who may be asymptotically infected and shedding.

Aerosol transmission

- While there may be occasional instances of aerosol transmission in limited settings, these events are rare.
- The presence of viral RNA in air vents indicates the presence of nucleic acid, not of infectious virions, and does not imply clinically significant aerosol transmission.
- The World Health Organization and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee all stand by the current recommendations that droplet precautions are safe and appropriate for routine clinical care of patients with or at risk of COVID-19.
- The current PPE recommendation for aerosol generating procedures for suspected, probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients includes P2/N95 respirator, protective eyewear, gloves, and gown/apron.

- Statewide Infection Clinical Network supports the WHO and AHPPC recommendation that airborne precautions be reserved for use in aerosol-generating procedures.
- As new, peer-reviewed evidence comes to hand, recommendations may need to change, but will remain in line with national guidelines.
- Staff must practice diligent hand hygiene and attention to standard precautions, vigilance with maintaining physical distancing in the workplace, as well as remaining at (or going) home if unwell and getting tested.

PPE supply in Queensland

- The COVID-19 Supply Chain Surety Division continues to work closely with Hospital and Health Services to help secure supplies of critical personal protective equipment and other materials and equipment required for the safe delivery of healthcare services.
- The division continues to undertake proactive planning and modified modelling to ensure Queensland is ready and prepared to manage all possible COVID-19 scenarios.
- We are continuing to secure critical PPE and other supplies to ensure our healthcare and frontline staff have the vital equipment they need.
- The division's Relationship and Demand Management team works directly with HHS contacts nominated by their Chief Executive for all matters relating to procurement and supply of COVID-19 critical items.

Advice for your patients and consumers – wearing masks

- Advice about wearing masks in the community has been the same since the pandemic began: it is not generally recommended UNLESS consumers live in a region where community transmission is occurring (such as the Greater Brisbane Area as of 22 August 2020), when they should take extra precautions.
- Children suspected of having COVID-19 should wear a mask when practicable and tolerated while outside their room. For children not suspected of COVID, masks may be encouraged (if tolerated) but are not required.
- Wearing a face covering or mask (with at least three layers) protects people in the community by providing an additional physical barrier to coronavirus.
- Keeping 1.5 metres between yourself and others and washing your hands are still the best defences against coronavirus.
- For people who choose to or need to wear a mask please advise them how to wear it properly:
 - Make sure the mask has at least three layers.
 - Wash or sanitise your hands before putting it on or taking it off.
 - Make sure the mask covers your nose and mouth and fits snugly under your chin, over the bridge of your nose and against the sides of your face.
 - Do not touch the front of your mask while wearing or removing it.
 - Do not allow the mask to hang around your neck or under your nose.
 - Do not reuse single use masks. Wash and dry reusable masks after use and store in a clean dry place.
 - When disposing of a mask, if possible; put it in a sealable bag to ensure the used mask won't be touched by others. Then put the sealed bag in the bin.

- While a mask can be used as an extra precaution, you must continue to:
 - Stay home if you are sick
 - If you have any COVID-19 symptoms, no matter how mild, get tested and stay at home
 - Stay 1.5 metres away from other people
 - Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or hand sanitiser
 - Sneeze or cough into your arm or a tissue. Then put the tissue in the bin.

More information

- To keep up to date with COVID-19 clinical information for Queensland health professionals, [subscribe to the mailing list](#).
- [Resources for Queensland clinicians](#)
- [Infection Control Expert Group](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- Queensland Health [website](#) including:
 - <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/protect-yourself-others/coronavirus-prevention#masks>
 - <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/protect-yourself-others/coronavirus-prevention>