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Policy: Selection and Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Date:

Revised Date:

Purpose: Personal protective equipment (PPE) is an essential element in preventing the transmission of disease causing microorganisms. PPE is worn as part of Routine Practices to prevent transmission of microorganisms from patient-to-staff and from staff-to-patient. The selection of PPE is based on the nature of the interaction between the health care provider and the patient and/or the likely mode(s) of transmission of infectious agents, according to the risk assessment. PPE includes gloves, gown and facial protection.

The following shall apply when selecting and using PPE:

1. Adequate supplies of easily accessible, appropriately sized disposable gloves, sterile gloves for aseptic procedures, gowns, eye protection, procedure masks and if applicable, N95 respirators shall be provided by the employer for employee use.
2. N95 respirators, if used, shall be fit tested for each employee and results of testing shall be documented.
3. Staff shall be trained in correct use and donning/doffing procedures for PPE.
4. Gloves and other single-use PPE (e.g. gowns, masks, eye protection, face shields) shall be worn once for a single patient/procedure and shall be discarded following use. Gloves shall not be washed.
5. Reusable PPE (e.g. gowns, eye protection, face shields) shall be worn once for a single patient/procedure, then cleaned and disinfected following each use.

Gloves:

- Select glove appropriate to task.
- Wear the correct size of gloves.

Gowns:

Long-sleeved gowns protect uncovered skin and clothing during procedures and patient care activities likely to produce soiling or generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, or excretions.

- Gowns should be cuffed and cover the front and back of the healthcare worker from the neck to mid-thigh.
- The type of gown selected is based on the potential for blood and body fluid penetration of the gown (i.e. fluid repellence when heavy liquid contamination is anticipated) as well as the requirement for sterility in some procedures (e.g. surgery, central line insertion, etc.).
- Gowns can be reusable or disposable, worn once for a single patient/procedure and laundered if reusable or discarded if disposable.

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Masks, Eye Protection and Face Shields:

- A mask is used by a health care provider (in addition to eye protection) to protect the mucous membranes of the nose and mouth when it is anticipated that a procedure or care activity is likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions or excretions, or within two metres of a coughing patient.
- Masks, eye protection, and face shields work together to protect the mucous membranes (i.e. eyes, nose, and mouth) of healthcare workers from droplets, splashes or sprays of blood or body fluids (e.g. cough or sneeze, release of drainage from skin lesions, etc.).
- If a risk assessment indicates the need for a mask, eye protection is also required as the eyes are also a portal of entry for microorganisms.

Eye Protection

Eye protection may be disposable or, if reusable, must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Prescription eye glasses are not acceptable by themselves as eye protection, but they may be worn underneath face shields and some types of eye protection.

Eye protection includes:

- safety glasses
- safety goggles
- face shields
- Visors attached to masks

N95 RESPIRATORS

An N95 respirator is used to prevent inhalation of small particles that may contain airborne infectious agents (e.g., *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (TB)). N95 respirators must also be worn for aerosol-generating procedures that have been shown to expose staff to undiagnosed pulmonary tuberculosis, including:

- sputum induction
- diagnostic bronchoscopy

References:

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario), Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Infection Prevention and Control for Clinical Office Practice. 1st Revision. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; April 2015. https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/IPAC_Clinical_Office_Practice_2013.pdf
2. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, Provincial Infectious Diseases Advisory Committee. Routine Practices and Additional Precautions in All Health Care Settings. 3rd edition. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario; November 2012.

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https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/RPAP_All_HealthCare_Settings_Eng_2012.pdf