

## COVID-19 Response – Q&A on Personal Protective Equipment May 6, 2020

From WebEx Discussion with Chantelle Riddle-Yarycky Infection Prevention & Control Specialist, WRHA

Before we talk about PPE, first of all, we recommend a few things for the public:

- Wash hands - use either soap & water or alcohol based hand rub (60-90%)
- Social distancing: this means staying 2 metres away from other people, not gathering in groups
- Remember not to touch your face – it's a hard habit to break. More people get germs introduced to their body this way than from being coughed on
- Stay home when sick

### Personal Protective Equipment – Masks

**What are recommendations for PPE – for organizations that do not provide health care, but may have people performing maintenance and cleaning or interacting with tenants – especially as offices open?**

**Types of Masks:** We recommend the homemade, reusable cloth masks for members of the public. If you have access to single use masks, you can use them; for the general public, there is no difference between wearing a surgical or reusable mask. We recommend referring to CDC (Centre for Disease Control) from the US Government for a pattern to make masks. The link is: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>. There are many patterns, and different information online regarding filters, patterns, styles, etc. however these are not verified by health organizations.

**Using a mask properly:** Launder the mask every day. If it becomes soiled mid-way through the day, change it. When you remove the mask, don't touch the front part of the mask. You remove it by pulling the ear loop, and fold it in half so the outside of the mask is in. Put the mask into something secure and breathable (paper bag, envelop) – so it will absorb any secretions. Don't put into plastic containers as these encourage bacterial growth.

**N95:** N95 Respirators filter far smaller particles than surgical masks. It filters 95% of the organisms. To wear it properly, N95 masks need to be fitted correctly so there's no leaking around it, otherwise it is no more effective than any other mask and may be dangerous because people think they are more protected than they are. You need N95 in healthcare when doing forced air procedures that result in aerosol (forced air through CPR, a bi-pap or c-pap machine).

For those who are providing health services such as setting up/removing bi-pap or c-pap machines, if someone has symptoms, is awaiting test results, or has tested positive, have your staff wear N95 when they go to the suites for those activities.

### Personal Protective Equipment – Eye protection

For eye protection, goggles or other safety eyewear are more than adequate. You want the barrier up to the eyebrow, wrapped around the eyes (cover the temple), and ideally almost touch the cheekbone. – Regular glasses don't cover to this extent, and we want to protect all the openings around the face.

Some people are moving toward a full-face shield, partly because they are quicker to manufacture and because it is more comfortable to wear for a long period of time (particularly in health care where you are bending over people, putting in breathing tubes, etc.). These are not necessary, however, and don't offer any more protection than safety eyewear.



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If you have a reception area and can install a clear/plexi glass screen, this can serve as PPE.

### Personal Protective Equipment - Gloves

We strongly recommend practicing hand hygiene to wearing gloves for most activities. People tend to over-wear the same pair of gloves. The gloves are spreading around tons of germs to surface. You cannot clean your gloves. If you don't touch things that are "wet, sticky, and not yours", you don't need to wear gloves. It gives a false sense of security. Gloves are not necessary for delivering items such as food trays, though they are necessary in the same way they have always been for food preparation.

If you are cleaning a kitchen or washroom or other cleaning that requires gloves, dishwashing gloves are great because they are stronger and can be disinfected. Good practices are: clean the dishwashing gloves and disinfect them after use, hang them to dry. Designate everybody's own gloves so they aren't shared between employees.

### **How do we choose a supplier for gloves and other PPE?**

If you are looking for gloves for medical tasks, when your hands would come in contact with body fluid, then you need to select medical grade supplies such as exam gloves. Check to see if they have any documentation ASTM rating (American Society for Testing and Materials). In health care, we stay away from latex gloves, or gloves have powders in them, because they cause allergies. Nitril gloves are usually better grades. In other times we recommend asking them to send a sample, however many places aren't sending samples now.

If you are looking for food handling, you want to look for a thicker quality. If you are just looking for gloves for cleaning, dishwashing gloves are good.

### Body Temperature Screening

### **Why is taking temperature a way to recognize positive signs? Do you recommend taking temperatures?**

Abnormal temperature related to COVID is usually a later symptom, meaning the person already has something full blown at that time. Monitoring temperatures as a precaution is a way to reassure staff and tenants that we are doing something. If you cannot invest a thermometer, it's not the end of the world.

We do recommend having people screen verbally - go on the screening tool website (<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>) for the questions to ask. Also worth noting that, given now it's allergy season, and people may have some of the symptoms such as body aches all the time - ask if it's new or worsening. When there is a concern, pull the person away and ask them to call Health Links (204-799-8200). Anyone with symptoms is eligible to be tested at this time.

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### Offices

#### **What are the recommendations for administrative offices? Are there considerations for reducing the risks of spread for staff?**

Create barriers between staff, such as cubicles or having people facing a wall. You could put one empty desk between people so they are further away, and try to have people back to back with each other rather than facing each other.

Minimize in-person meetings. When unavoidable, try to hold meetings in a larger room to maintain social distancing.

Encourage staff to take 5 mins every hour, or couple times a day, to wipe commonly touched items such as phone or keyboard with a disinfectant.

Wearing masks is not necessary. Really encourage people to stay home if they are sick.

#### **We have a front reception area. It is limited to 1 person at a time. Tenants will come in to pay rent or do lease renewals. We clean the debit machine just as other store fronts. How about the counters? Hand sanitizers? What are the responsibilities when we deal with the public?**

Cleaning your hands is huge. Emphasize with staff the key times to clean your hands – after handling money, and before breaks - coffee and lunch, smoke, when you take medication, putting on lip balm, etc.

We can only clean so much before all we do is cleaning. You don't need to clean the counter after every guest. You could clean at the top of the hour, or twice a day, whatever you can manage.

### Disinfecting spaces

#### **Effective cleaning needs three things:**

1. The right product
2. The right wet time
3. Some elbow grease

And clean your hands before and after cleaning – even if you are wearing gloves.

#### **Recommended practices when disinfecting surfaces:**

##### Products

- Use the correct disinfectant product. Consult this website which lists common disinfectants:  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
- A great product is bleach – 9 parts water, 1 part bleach. The downside to bleach is that it can be more difficult to use because it takes colour out of items like clothes and you need to use gloves.
- Wipes are a good product, but they get dirty and be sure to change them often – only wipe 1-2 items then change it.

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### Proper Use

- Take note of the products' **wet contact time**
  - We want to ensure that the surface is kept visibly wet for the full contact time indicated on the product label. The contact time, also known as the wet time, is the time that the disinfectant needs to stay wet on a surface in order to ensure efficacy. It is determined by the manufacturer and based on the results of microbiological testing. Contact times for disinfectants range from 15 seconds to ten minutes.
    - Wipes have 5 min wet contact time, meaning it must have a wet appearance on the surface for 5 mins. It will usually dry within 2 mins, so you should wipe again after it dries. If you're using wipes, start at one end of the room and work clockwise around the room – wipe everything and then come back around to wipe it again (with a new wipe!)
    - Usually 3 mins is enough for bleach solutions.
- No double dipping in your bucket: once you pull a rag out of the bucket, it cannot go back in. It will contaminate the cleaning solution. Change your cloth often: use a new cloth for each surface.
- Put the cleaning product onto your cloth, rather than onto a surface.
- Use flip-top bottle to tip disinfectant products into a cloth to wipe it down. We don't recommend spray bottles because it can splash back in your face. If you have to use a spray, turn away your head.
- Scrub the area, simply wetting it is not enough. Physical rubbing and scrubbing is needed to get products distributed.
- We expect increased cleaning frequency to be the 'new normal' for a while – budget for it for the foreseeable future.

### Frequency

- A couple extra times each day is usually fine.

### Social activities and common spaces

**There will be increased pressure for some social activities, even with group sizes set at 10 or less. Some organizations have been thinking about restarting coffee times – with staggered times and reduced seating, for example. What would you recommend for social activities in buildings at this time?**

Staggered times and reduced seating are great. Make sure people clean their hands before coming in. Have hand sanitizer available or hand washing areas.

If coffee time includes cookies, have hand sanitizer by the cookies so people clean their hands before eating. Use individually wrapped snacks or have someone with clean hand passing out the cookies with tongs.

Limit finger touches to anything – have one person serving all the coffee so people aren't all touching the urn. Use disposable products for milk and sugar for now.

