



# Coronavirus (COVID-19) – A guide to the conventional use of PPE

Updated 21 October 2020

In the changing coronavirus (COVID-19) environment, content is often being updated. To ensure you are aware of the most recent changes, all content updates and the date the document was last updated will be highlighted in yellow.

## Conventional use of PPE

The following guide outlines the appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) for the Victorian health sector during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response. Prescribing the correct levels of PPE, in addition to other hierarchy of controls, will ensure that healthcare workers are protected from infection. Whilst this advice is for the healthcare sector, it can be used to inform any local policy.

Table 1 outlines the required PPE for healthcare workers who are in direct contact with a person who is: assessed as low or no risk for coronavirus (COVID-19); or is confirmed or suspected of having coronavirus (COVID-19) or is in quarantine.

Table 2 provides further guidance to assist in clarifying the required PPE for common circumstances.

Please note that other infectious diseases requiring PPE as part of transmission-based precautions are not addressed in this document.

PPE is only one element of healthcare worker protection and it is essential that the hierarchy of controls is implemented in its entirety to reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission.

This guidance is regularly reviewed and updated as required.








## Associated documents

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) – PPE and levels of protection (Word) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-ppe-and-levels-protection>>
- COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guideline (Word) <<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid19-infection-control-guidelines>>

**Table 1: Conventional use**

Due to the prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Victoria and advice regarding the universal use of masks in the community, Tier 0 is currently not applicable.

TIER	For use	 Hand hygiene	 Disposable gloves	 Level 1 gown and plastic apron	 Disposable gown	 Surgical mask	 P2 / N95 respirator <sup>1</sup>	 Eye protection
<b>Tier 0 – Standard precautions<sup>2</sup></b>	For people assessed as low risk or no risk for COVID-19, that is, they do not meet the clinical criteria for COVID-19.	✓	As per standard precautions	As per standard precautions	As per standard precautions	As per standard precautions	✗	As per standard precautions
<b>Tier 1 – Area of higher clinical risk</b>	In areas where the person is NOT suspected <sup>3</sup> or confirmed to have COVID-19.	✓	As per standard precautions <sup>2</sup>	As per standard precautions	As per standard precautions	Minimum Level 1	✗	✓ Face shield where practical
<b>Tier 2 – Droplet and contact precautions</b>	Providing care to a person who is suspected to have COVID-19 (excluding when undertaking an AGP <sup>4</sup> or there is a risk of AGBs <sup>5</sup> ).	✓	✓	✓	or Level 2, 3 or 4	Level 2 or 3	✗	✓ Face shield where practical
<b>Tier 3 – Airborne and contact precautions and aerosol generating procedures</b>	1. At all times when providing care to probable <sup>Error!</sup> and confirmed COVID-19 patients, regardless of the amount of time in contact 2. Undertaking an AGP <sup>4</sup> on a person with clinically suspected, probable <sup>6</sup> or laboratory confirmed COVID-19	✓	✓	✗	or Level 2, 3 or 4	✗	✓	✓ Face shield where practical

<sup>1</sup> Fit-check P2/N95 respirators with each use. Respirators with exhalation valves are not recommended for use. For information on P2/N95 respirators go to <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-infection-control-guidelines-version-2-21-june-2020>

<sup>2</sup> For information on standard precautions and hand hygiene, see <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/infectious-diseases/infection-control-guidelines/standard-additional-precautions>

<sup>3</sup> Suspected includes persons awaiting the results of a test, where there may be symptoms that could be consistent with coronavirus (COVID-19) but no epidemiological risk factors.

<sup>4</sup> AGPs = aerosol-generating procedures. Examples include: bronchoscopy, tracheal intubation, non-invasive ventilation (e.g. BiPAP, CPAP), high flow nasal oxygen therapy, manual ventilation before intubation, intubation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, suctioning, sputum induction, nebuliser use (nebulisers should be discouraged and alternatives considered such as a spacer). See the [COVID-19 Infection prevention and control guideline](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19) at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/health-services-and-general-practitioners-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

<sup>5</sup> AGBs = aerosol-generating behaviours. Examples include: coughing, screaming, shouting etc.

<sup>6</sup> A person who has a compatible clinical illness and meets one or more of the following epidemiological criteria.

In the 14 days prior to illness onset:

- Was a close contact of a confirmed or probable case
- Travelled internationally
- Resided in an area where outbreaks are present, including aged care
- Lived in or travelled through a geographically localised area with elevated risk of community transmission, as defined by public health authorities.

Where a patient's history cannot be obtained, they should be considered as a suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) case until further screening information can be obtained.

TIER	For use	 Hand hygiene	 Disposable gloves	 Level 1 gown and plastic apron	 Disposable gown	 Surgical mask	 P2 / N95 respirator <sup>1</sup>	 Eye protection
	3. Providing care to a person with suspected COVID-19 and there is a risk of AGBs <sup>5</sup>							

**Table 2: Conventional use – contextual guide**

Due to the high prevalence of coronavirus (COVID-19) in Victoria and advice regarding the universal use of masks in the community, Tier 0 is currently not applicable

TIER	For use in	Further context – examples
<b>Tier 0* – Standard precautions</b>	For patients assessed as low or no risk for COVID-19, that is, they do not meet the clinical criteria for COVID-19.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthcare workers (HCWs) may require gloves, surgical face mask, gown/apron or eye protection where there is a risk of exposure to or splashes from blood or body fluids.</li> <li>HCWs performing an AGP on a person identified as low or no risk of COVID-19 may choose to wear a surgical face mask, gown/apron and eye protection as part of standard precautions.</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 1 – Area of higher clinical risk</b>	In areas where the person is NOT suspected <sup>3</sup> or confirmed to have COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HCWs not involved in the direct care of COVID-19 patients</li> <li>Undertaking surgery or AGPs on patients with a negative COVID-19 clinical risk screen and/or laboratory test result</li> <li>Patients with aerosol generating behaviours who are not confirmed or suspected of COVID-19</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 2 – Droplet and contact precautions</b>	Providing care to a person who is suspected to have COVID-19 (excluding when undertaking an AGP or there is a risk of AGBs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing routine nursing and medical care to suspected COVID-19 patient.</li> <li>Patient transfer within a facility of a suspected COVID-19 cases</li> <li>Cleaning and disinfection of room where there has been no AGP performed or if 30 mins has elapsed since the AGP</li> <li>HCWs at ambulance arrival and handover areas where the patient is suspected of having COVID-19</li> <li>Handling deceased persons with suspected COVID-19</li> <li>HCWs transporting suspected COVID-19 patients in ambulance</li> <li>Working at a COVID-19 testing site</li> </ul>
<b>Tier 3 – Airborne and contact precautions and aerosol generating procedures</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At all times when providing care to probable<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup> and confirmed COVID-19 patients, regardless of the amount of time in contact</li> <li>Undertaking an AGP<sup>4</sup> on a person with clinically suspected, probable<sup>Error! Bookmark not defined.</sup> or laboratory confirmed COVID-19</li> <li>Providing care to a person with suspected COVID-19 and there is a risk of AGBs<sup>5</sup></li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HCWs providing direct clinical care to probable and confirmed COVID-19 patients</li> <li>HCWs in within open wards, emergency departments or urgent care centres where probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients are being treated</li> <li>HCWs within an open intensive care unit (if probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients are present)</li> <li>HCWs within an intensive care unit pod (if probable or confirmed COVID-19 patients are present)</li> <li>Cleaning and disinfection of a room where there has been an AGP performed within the previous 30 mins</li> </ul>

## References

- [Coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\). Case and contact management guidelines for health services and general practitioners \(DHHS\). \(Word\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-case-and-contact-management-guidelines-health-services-and-general-practitioners)  
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-case-and-contact-management-guidelines-health-services-and-general-practitioners>

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) healthcare worker PPE guidance \(DHHS\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19>.

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Available at: [DHHS.vic – coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>