



**PEAK**  
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## Infection Control: Use of Personal Protective Equipment

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After reading the newsletter, the home health aide should be able to:

1. Describe the purpose of standard precautions.
2. Identify four types of PPE and their purpose.
3. Discuss appropriate donning and removal of PPE.

Now, more than ever, infection control is at the forefront of everything we do in healthcare. While infection control has always been critically important, the current COVID-19 pandemic has brought it into focus like never before in homes, communities and healthcare settings.



Standard precautions is the basic set of guidelines used to prevent the spread of infection in healthcare settings, including home care. These guidelines are applied to all clients, and make the assumption that the blood and body fluids of all clients may be infectious. When used correctly, standard precautions provide a high level of protection, helping to keep healthcare providers safe and reducing the spread of infection to other clients.

Key components of standard precautions include hand hygiene and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). This newsletter will discuss safe use of PPE, including gloves, gowns, masks/respirators, and face shields. Precautions based on the type of contact with the client will be covered, as well as effective donning and removal of PPE.

### PPE—When to Use?

PPE is equipment that helps to protect the healthcare provider from infection and prevent spread of germs to other clients. Transmission of infection is most likely to occur

through contact with blood, mucous membranes, non-intact skin such as wounds or rashes, and body fluids, such as secretions and excretions. PPE must be used whenever this type of contact is likely.

**Gloves:** These are the most commonly-used PPE, worn to protect hands when contact with blood, body fluids, mucous membranes or non-intact skin may occur. Examples of situations requiring use of non-sterile gloves include providing mouth or perineal care, cleaning urine or stool from a client, emptying bedpans or emesis basins, and changing linens contaminated by body fluids/waste,

**Gown:** Protects the skin and clothing when there may be splashing or spraying of blood or body fluids, contact with wounds/drainage, and when carrying or emptying containers of fluids that may leak or spill.

**Face mask/Respirator:** Protects the nose and mouth from blood and body fluids that may spray or splash, such as droplets expelled while talking, sneezing or coughing. A respirator (N-95) can also protect from airborne germs.



**Face shield:** Protects the face, eyes, nose, and mouth from splashing or spraying of blood and body fluids. Often worn with a mask and/or respirator for added protection. Glasses and contact

lenses do not provide adequate protection for the eyes.

Bear in mind that these guidelines are for standard precautions only. A client with a known or suspected infection may be on transmission-based precautions, such as contact, droplet or airborne. If so, guidelines for the specific type of precautions must be followed, along with standard precautions.

### **Safe and Effective Use of PPE**

In order to provide adequate protection, PPE must be put on and taken off using proper technique. Otherwise, any germs from the client may be spread to the healthcare provider or other clients. Always consider the outside of gloves and the outside front of all other PPE (plus sleeves of gown) contaminated after use, and avoid touching these areas when removing. Also, it is important to perform hand hygiene before and after use of PPE. Remember that wearing gloves is not a substitute for cleaning hands with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Guidelines for donning and removal of PPE include:

**Gloves:** Gloves are usually the last PPE to be applied, and the first to be removed after use. Put on non-sterile gloves by picking up one glove at the wrist and pulling it onto the opposite hand. With the gloved hand, pick up the second glove by the wrist, and pull it onto the other hand. If a gown is worn, pull the cuffs of the gloves over the cuffs of the gown.



Gloves should be removed after contact with the client or equipment, surfaces or objects in the client's environment. Remove gloves by pulling the outside of one glove at the palm, peeling it off inside out without touching the skin. The gloved hand is now holding the removed glove. The second glove is removed by sliding the bare hand between the glove and skin and pushing the glove off the hand and over the first glove. The bare hand should not touch the outside of the glove. The gloves can now be discarded into a waste receptacle, followed by hand hygiene. Gloves should not be cleaned with soap and water or hand sanitizer, as this can create tiny holes that allow germs to enter. Disposable gloves should never be re-used. Avoid touching your face or areas of your body while wearing gloves. Also, do not touch objects or surfaces in the environment, except when necessary.

**Gown:** The gown is pulled on over the arms and body with the opening in the back, and the material should cover the back. The neck and waist ties should be tied securely. After use, the ties are untied or gently broken, and the gown folded in on itself as it is pulled off the body and arms from the inside of the neck area. The outside of the gown front and sleeves should not be touched. The gown should be held away from the body, turned inside out, and rolled into a bundle for disposal.

**Mask/Respirator:** Apply the face mask by tying the two ties at the crown of the head and the neck. If the mask has ear loops, place these over each ear. Make sure the mask covers the nose and mouth, and mold the metal clip snugly around the nose. To remove, untie the ties or remove the loops and use these to pull the mask forward, off of the face. Avoid touching the front of the mask. Respirators must be fit-tested before use. They are applied by placing firmly over the nose and mouth, and bringing the two straps around the head and neck. There should be no hair, jewelry, clothing or other objects between the skin and the respirator. Mold the metal clip snugly around the nose. Check to make sure there is a tight seal when inhaling, and there are no leaks when exhaling. Remove the respirator by pulling the lower strap up over the head, followed by the upper strap, and discard. Do not touch the front of the respirator.

**Face shield:** The strap of the face shield should be placed over the head and the clear plastic shield positioned over the face. To remove, grasp the head strap and lift up, avoiding touching the clear plastic shield.

When multiple types of PPE are required, there is a specific order for donning and removing the items to avoid contamination. When donning PPE, the gown should be put on first, followed by the mask, face shield, and then gloves last. Removal should start with the gloves, followed by the face shield, gown, and then the mask. After removal, all disposable PPE should be placed into a bag which is then securely tied, or into a designated receptacle. Follow your agency's policies for disposal of PPE. Hand hygiene is then performed when all PPE is removed and disposed of.



The transmission of germs that can cause illness is a very serious concern in healthcare settings. Use of proper hand hygiene and standard precautions can help to greatly decrease this risk for clients, as well as protect the safety of the healthcare provider.



**Infection Control:  
Use of Personal Protective Equipment**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Place the letter of the one best answer in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_ 1. Standard precautions are used when providing care for:  
A. only clients with a known infection  
B. clients who have an increased risk for infection  
C. clients who are showing any symptoms of infection  
D. all clients
- \_\_\_\_ 2. Key components of standard precautions include:  
A. hand hygiene and use of personal protective equipment  
B. contact precautions and hand hygiene  
C. droplet precautions and use of personal protective equipment  
D. transmission-based precautions and hand hygiene
- \_\_\_\_ 3. Risk of infection is increased when there is contact with:  
A. blood  
B. body fluids  
C. mucous membranes  
D. all of the above
- \_\_\_\_ 4. Which of the following types of personal protective equipment (PPE) provides the best protection from airborne germs?  
A. N-95 respirator  
B. face shield  
C. face mask  
D. gown
- \_\_\_\_ 5. Glasses and contact lenses can provide adequate eye protection when face shields are not available.  
A. True  
B. False

- \_\_\_6. The first step in using PPE for standard precautions is to:
- A. put on a face mask
  - B. perform hand hygiene
  - C. apply gloves
  - D. put on a face shield
- \_\_\_7. Which of the following PPE requires a fit test before use?
- A. face mask
  - B. face shield
  - C. N-95 respirator
  - D. gown
- \_\_\_8. Which of the following PPE is usually last to be put on and first to be removed?
- A. gloves
  - B. face mask
  - C. gown
  - D. face shield
- \_\_\_9. Which of the following is considered “clean”, or not contaminated, after use?
- A. sleeves of the gown
  - B. ties of the face mask
  - C. outside of the gloves
  - D. all of the above
- \_\_\_10. After use, PPE should be removed in what order?
- A. face shield > gloves > gown > mask
  - B. mask > face shield > gown > gloves
  - C. gloves > mask > gown > face shield
  - D. gloves > face shield > gown > mask

