



Personalizing Your Protective Equipment

FAQs on PPE

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Below are a few frequently asked questions (FAQs) that may be helpful.

Q: Contact tracing and antibody testing among health care workers (HCW) shows that PPE is very effective in preventing COVID-19 infection when used correctly. With all of the PPE choices and conflicting science about transmission of the SARS-2 coronavirus, how do I choose the right PPE for me?

A: It depends upon your task. How well can you function safely and effectively in your gear? You should also consider the amount of exposure that you experience, and the level of risk that you can accept. A HCW with a chronic medical condition* may only feel comfortable wearing PPE that provides the greatest potential protection that can be tolerated physically, even though the amount of likely exposure throughout a given work period may be low.

**Chronic medical conditions include diabetes, obesity, chronic lung disease, an autoimmune disease, or an older age.*

A couple of examples:

- A healthy nurse working all day in the ED may feel very protected and effective wearing a gown, gloves, a surgical mask, and full-face visor that rarely fogs.
- Another health care worker, who has a medically fragile spouse, might be more comfortable wearing an appropriately fitted N-95 mask and goggles for every patient contact every day, even for well-checks and routine follow-ups. That being said, the following guidelines say surgical or N95 are acceptable and provide needed protection. IDSA guidelines say surgical or N95 is acceptable for patient encounters: <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-infection-prevention/>.

Q: If there is no aerosol generating procedure occurring, is there a benefit to wearing an N-95 mask compared with a surgical mask?

A: A surgical mask or an N95 would be acceptable for encounters when the HCW is NOT in the presence of the AGP. This means that a surgical mask is safe and effective. We must reserve N95s for AGPs and proven COVID positive encounters. IDSA guidelines say a surgical mask or an N95 are both acceptable for patient encounters. <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-infection-prevention/>.

**A surgical mask and eye protection (various available) = all patient interactions
N95 and goggles = AGPs and COVID-19 + patients**

Please follow your badge buddy. [Link to the PPE infographic is here.](#)

“We wear surgical masks for all of our encounters every day unless we know we are seeing a COVID-19 positive patient and we feel safe doing so. We also felt safe with this prior to testing all hospital admissions.”

- *Dr. Suzanne Whitworth and Dr. Marc Mazade*

Q: I have my own personal N-95 mask from an outside vendor. I want to wear it. Is that okay?

A: While providing more filtration than a medical mask, some N-95s are not medically approved and may not protect against splashes of body fluids. If you feel wearing an N95 mask from home feels safer, you must wear a medical mask over any exhaust ports that could expose colleagues to your unfiltered exhaled breath. Fit testing assures the N-95 mask is providing protection against aerosols. Using a Cook Children's procured fit-tested and approved N-95 mask is the safest and is recommended.

Q: I purchased some eyeglasses attachments. May I wear them?

A: Eyeglass attachments were being piloted in the ED to provide improved eye protection for some employees who had very fine tasks that required the utmost visual clarity. Attachments were distributed by the ED manager to staff who needed them. The fit-to-face was examined by the manager who gave an executive “Go/No-Go” ruling. There were some “NO-GO” rulings! Visors worn over eyeglasses are recommended and to most likely help keep mists out of the eyes. Eyeglasses with attachments or visors are not substitutes for goggles during an AGP. The Command Center is also qualified to fit the eye shields.

Q: How can I work together with my co-workers to stay safe when we are all wearing different types of PPE?

A: Adopt a **PPE timeout** prior to performing any aerosol-generating procedure. This recommendation came from an insightful employee who was involved in an incident where an assistant was wearing a surgical mask and eye shields. The assistant jumped in to help restrain a child who was having a nasopharyngeal sample collected by a provider who was wearing an N-95 mask and goggles. Unfortunately, the well-meaning assistant was placed in quarantine after the child turned out to have COVID-19.

I hope this helps clear up any confusion regarding your PPE equipment.

Should you have any questions, please speak to your supervisor or reach out to Occupational Health at COVID19OHS@CookChildrens.org.

As always, send any and all COVID-19 questions to COVID19questions@CookChildrens.org.

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