

Infection prevention and control advice when novel coronavirus infection is suspected

Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV). Basic hygiene measures include:

- washing hands regularly with soap and water, or cleansing with hand sanitiser¹
- staying at home if you are sick
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow
- cleaning surfaces regularly.

In a **health care setting**, standard precautions should be applied. These include:

- hand and respiratory hygiene
- the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)
- safe waste management
- injection safety practices
- proper linen
- environmental cleaning
- sterilization of shared patient-care equipment.

For **other settings**, the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks can reduce the spread of infection when used correctly and in the appropriate context. This may be recommended in workplaces where people are more likely to come in contact with the disease.

For **most people**, PPE such as face masks are not recommended, as there is limited evidence that the use of face masks prevents the spread of transmission of disease. The WHO recommends that there may be benefit in wearing a face mask to reduce the spread of infection from people **with symptoms** of an acute respiratory infection, but not for the general population unless there is a severe epidemic.

Table 1 summarises the recommendations for the use of PPE in different settings. These recommendations are a guide only and workplace settings not listed in the table should consider their ability to maintain the 1 metre rule and use the table to inform their use of PPE. In general, surgical/medical masks prevent the dispersal of droplets by an infected patient and the inhalation of droplets if within 1 metre of a coughing individual. Cough and hand hygiene will have a bigger impact.

¹ HHNZ recommends that ABHR solutions should meet the EN1500 testing standard for bactericidal effect. Generally, products meeting this standard have an ethanol concentration of at least 70% volume / volume (v/v) or a 60% concentration of isopropyl alcohol (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Infection-Prevention/Hand-Hygiene/PR/HHNZ-implementation-guidelines-June-2013.pdf>)

Table 1 – Recommendations on the use of personal protective equipment by setting

(shaded area shows recommendation)

Setting		Recommendation			
		Face mask	Gloves	Gown or apron	Eye protection
General public					
No symptoms of coronavirus		Not recommended			
Person with symptoms of an acute respiratory illness and assessment indicates risk of novel coronavirus		Surgical/medical			
Workplace					
People who can maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential coronavirus symptoms	Receptionists and other staff in health care settings (eg, pharmacy staff, orderlies, cleaners and dieticians), education staff	Not recommended			
People who, due to the nature of their job, may be unable to maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential coronavirus symptoms	Police, prison staff, customs staff	Surgical/medical	If direct contact likely		
People who, due to the nature of their job, cannot maintain at least 1 metre contact distance from people with potential coronavirus symptoms	Primary care clinical staff, ambulance staff, emergency department staff	As per infection prevention protocols (eg, surgical/medical masks and eye protection, either surgical mask with shield or glasses) if necessary			
People who, due to the nature of their job, cannot maintain at least 1 metre contact distance from people with potential coronavirus AND have	ICU staff, recovery room staff, people providing hands-on hospital care	As per infection prevention protocols			

<p>a high likelihood of potential contact with aerosolised respiratory secretions from invasive procedures – ventilation, suctioning etc.</p>	<p>to people in Droplet and Contact precautions</p>	
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How to correctly wear and remove a face mask²

If you are unwell or have a job which requires you to be in close contact with people who may have coronavirus, it is recommended you use a face mask. It is important that face masks are worn and removed correctly. Masks should fit snugly and fully cover your nose and mouth.

How to wear a mask:

- place over nose, mouth and chin
- fit flexible nose piece over nose bridge
- secure on head with ties or elastic
- adjust to fit – secure on your head, fitting snugly around your face with no gaps
- avoid touching or adjusting your mask during use.

How to remove a mask:

- avoid touching the front of the mask
- if the mask has ties, untie the bottom, then top tie
- remove from face
- discard, do not use again
- wash hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser immediately.

² Adapted from <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/PPESlides6-29-04.pdf>