



St John Ambulance (VIC)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guide

PPE in The Workplace During COVID-19

COVID-19 has changed the use of PPE in workplaces. PPE must be provided by employers and staff must follow guidelines, if this is a reasonable request.

This guide has been created to help workplaces decide:

- What PPE is required in their own workplace
- When PPE should be used
- When PPE should not be used

Employers must provide PPE appropriate for the role and tasks to be completed and must educate staff on correct and incorrect use of PPE, including removing and disposing of PPE.

Incorrect use of PPE may pose an even greater risk in spreading germs than no PPE at all.

An important point to note is that PPE and infection control methods work in conjunction with each other, for example continuing to perform hand hygiene while wearing a mask is critical.

Gloves

Washing hands frequently or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser will usually be a better control measure against infection than wearing gloves. When a person wears gloves, they may come into contact with germs which are then transferred to other objects or their face if they don't replace and dispose of or clean their gloves between tasks. Therefore it is not a requirement for all staff to wear gloves, but gloves may be worn based on the risks and tasks to be performed.



In all workplaces, gloves should be made available in case they might be required.



When to use gloves:

- When staff are unable to wash their hands or are unable to access alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- When providing first aid and medical treatment
- When cleaning surfaces with sanitiser
- When handling food
- When cleaning
- When gardening
- By some trades



When not to use gloves:

- As a substitute for frequent hand washing
- If gloves cannot be regularly changed
- If it is more practical for workers to wash their hands or use hand sanitiser

Masks

Not all staff or visitors are required to wear masks but may opt to depending on their role and the risks present. Having masks available for circumstances when additional risks are present, such as when there are outbreaks of COVID-19 in the workplace, is a proactive step employers can choose to take. There are multiple types of masks that offer different types of protection:

	P2/N95/KN95	Surgical
Filtration efficiency	95%	none
Fit around face	Snug	Loose
Protects wearer from airborne droplets?	Yes	No
Protects others from the wearer's airborne droplets?	Yes	Yes



When to use masks:

- When social distancing cannot be observed and staff will be in close contact with each other, customers, or patients. Such as healthcare workers, allied health, aged care, etc.
- If the workplace has a suspected case of COVID-19 present
- If the workplace has a confirmed case of COVID-19 present
- For those who may be unwell but are confirmed as negative when tested for COVID-19, so they do not spread cold or flu which may cause concern during a time of pandemic.
- When conducting CPR, as particles may be emitted during compressions



When not to use masks:

- Customer service staff and public officials do not need to wear a mask as there is less chance they will come into close contact with suspect or confirmed cases
- If the wearer continually touches the mask while wearing it
- If the wearer doesn't combine wearing a mask with hand hygiene. Masks on their own will not control the COVID-19 virus.



Eye Protection: Glasses/Goggles/Face Shields

Eye protection can act as a physical barrier from droplet spray and prevent unintentional rubbing of eyes between hand washing. For many workplaces, eye protection will not be required. Good hygiene practices should be followed if eye protection is used.



When to use eye protection:

- For workers who are in close proximity to droplet spray, for example healthcare workers, police, corrections and security work.



When not to use eye protection:

- If the wearer doesn't combine wearing eye protection with hand hygiene. Eye protection on its own will not control the COVID-19 virus.
- If the eye protection hasn't been sanitised in between uses (if reusable)



Gowns/Suits

Gowns and suits with long sleeves are used to protect the wearers clothing from airborne droplets, which can then transfer on to hands and the face, or to others. They are generally not recommended for non-healthcare workplaces.



When to use gowns/suits:

- For healthcare workers performing aerosol generating procedures



When not to use gowns/suits:

- If gowns/suits are the only PPE in use and the wearer is not wearing gloves, a face shield, or a mask.

Hand Sanitiser



Critical for all workplaces regardless of the type of work performed, hand hygiene is the most important form of defence for all people against spreading COVID-19. Alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 70% ethanol or 70% isopropanol as the active ingredient must be used as per the manufacturer's instructions when it is not possible to wash and dry hands. Providing enough hand sanitiser will ensure workers are able to regularly perform hand hygiene as directed. An individual bottle distributed freely to all workers will ensure they can continue to maintain hand hygiene regardless of their location or role.



When to use Hand Sanitiser:

- All workers regardless of their role should use hand sanitiser if they are unable to wash their hands:
 - Before and after eating
 - After coughing or sneezing
 - After going to the toilet, and
 - When changing tasks and after touching potentially contaminated surfaces

Surface Wipes and Sprays

Frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, counters, phones, EFTPOS machines, etc., should be prioritised for cleaning in order to reduce the possibility of spreading COVID-19. At a minimum, all surfaces in workplaces should be cleaned at least once daily depending on traffic and frequency of touch. Wiping with a damp cloth alone is not enough to remove or kill germs – surfaces must be disinfected to be considered clean. Surface wipes or alcohol sprays in a concentration of 80% are an easy and convenient way to disinfect. An alcohol spray can be sprayed across surfaces and wiped with a paper towel or tissue that is then disposed of, and then left to dry. This method can be more environmentally friendly than wipes. However, wipes may be convenient as they are an all-in-one solution. Regardless of the method, workers should be wearing gloves as a minimum PPE requirement when cleaning



When to use Surface Wipes and Sprays:

- At least daily on surfaces that are touched multiple times a day, regardless of whether it is by the same person or different people. The frequency of cleaning should increase with more people doing more touching.
- If you are unsure, you should treat the surface as if it is frequently touched



When not to use Surface Wipes and Sprays:

- Any areas which have not had recent human contact, such as within the last few days, are unlikely to be a potential source of infection



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