



The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Bulletin has been created to provide ongoing direction to healthcare providers regarding the recommended guidelines, processes and provincial supply of PPE.

Droplet/Contact PLUS Precautions Explained

Why the **PLUS**?

Droplet/Contact **PLUS** precautions is a combination of both 1) droplet and 2) contact precautions with the addition of 3) airborne precautions, which includes the use of an N95 respirator when performing an aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP). Hence, the **PLUS**.

Contact precautions are used with a patient/client/resident with known or suspected infections that represent an increased risk for contact transmission. Recommended PPE for contact precautions includes gloves and a gown.

Droplet precautions are used with a patient/client/resident with known or suspected infection with a pathogen transmitted through “droplets” (i.e., when they sneeze, speak or cough around you). Recommended PPE for droplet precautions is a procedure mask and eye protection (full face shield or goggles).

Airborne precautions are used with a patient/client/resident known or suspected to be infected with pathogens transmitted through the air; for example, tuberculosis. Recommended PPE for airborne precautions is the addition of a fit-tested NIOSH-approved N95 respirator.

COVID-19 is normally transmitted through droplets; however, the virus can become airborne if performing an AGMP. In order to be effectively protected, the recommendation is to follow droplet and contact precautions with patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 **PLUS** airborne precautions – N95 respirator – if performing an AGMP.

An updated [Droplet/Contact PLUS Precautions](#) poster has been added to the saskatchewan.ca/covid19 Information for Health Care Providers site and should be placed outside of rooms of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. A [list of AGMPs](#) can also be found on the site.

Point of Care Assessment:

A point of care risk assessment (PCRA) is performed on each patient to help you decide what, if any, PPE you need to wear to protect yourself and to prevent the spread of germs. It is extremely important that this step is always followed with each patient, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic to help stop the spread of the virus.

During a PCRA you are to assess the task, the patient and the environment prior to each patient interaction. A PCRA is to be performed prior to contact with every patient, every time, even if the patient has been placed on additional precautions as more PPE may be required. Point of Care Risk Assessment Guidelines and a [PCRA algorithm](#) have been created to assist you through this process.





Gowns and Gloves:

In Droplet/Contact PLUS Precautions, a gown and gloves should be worn. Long-sleeved isolation gowns help protect healthcare providers' clothing against blood and body fluids, including respiratory droplets. They also protect visitors and patients because they prevent the transfer of microorganisms and body fluids in patient isolation situations.

Gloves used in health care are defined as single-use disposable gloves and are used during medical procedures or provision of care. Once you have used them for the intended single-use, dispose of them properly. The [Rapid Update, Gloves are not continuous use](#) can help to clarify how gloves should be worn in a healthcare setting. Hand washing before and after every patient encounter remains of paramount importance regardless of glove use.

Is a Procedure Mask Enough?

There is understandable anxiety that comes with providing care to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive patients. Some staff and physicians are concerned that a procedure mask is not enough to protect them from the transmission of the virus. When worn correctly, a procedure mask provides excellent protection from droplet transfer of the virus. N95 respirators are used when there is airborne transfer of the virus, which only occurs when small particles of the virus are aerosolized (become airborne) during AGMPs.

There is increased risk of self-contamination when doffing N95 respirators, which can increase the possibility of transmission. Therefore, it is not recommended that staff/physicians wear an N95 respirator unless they are performing an AGMP. A [Rapid Update](#) has been created based on clinical evidence and best practice on the effectiveness of procedure masks compared to respirators.

Additional resources have been created that you can share with your teams to help clarify questions you may have about procedure masks, N95s or AGMPs:

- [Right Mask for the Task](#)
- [Ear protectors – Correct and Incorrect Wear](#)
- [Is Coughing an AGMP?](#)
- [Putting on \(Donning\) Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)
- [Taking off \(Doffing\) Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#)

Eye Protection:

When following Droplet/Contact PLUS precautions, eye protection is required. There are many different options available for use and some may wonder which one they should be wearing for protection against the transfer of COVID-19.

Recommended eye protection:





- The Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) is moving towards a provincial standard of **face shield** use with **suspected or confirmed COVID-19 positive** patient/client/resident.
- Fully sealed goggles (that are indirectly vented or non-vented) are suitable if a face shield is not available.
- Please note, either choice cannot interfere with the seal of your N95 respirator.

A [Rapid Update on Eye Protection](#) has been created to provide more clarity on which type of eye protection should be used and when.

I am involved in AGMPs, which N95 do I wear? – Fit Testing Information:

If you are performing AGMPs, you must be adding a fit-tested NIOSH-approved N95 respirator to your arsenal of PPE. Unlike a procedure mask, respirators need to be properly fitted to each individual's face to ensure a proper seal so that airborne particles cannot infiltrate the respirator where it makes contact with your skin. If you have not been fit tested for an N95 or if it has been two years, please contact your local occupational health and safety (OHS) professional to arrange a fitting.

Once you are fit tested you will be provided with the make, model and size of your respirator. Make sure you know this information and keep it available for when needed.

Please remember that you must be clean-shaven, this includes moustaches, within the previous 24 hours (preferably 12 hours) so the respirator can seal to the skin of the face or neck; if an employee or physician presents to their fit testing appointment not clean-shaven, the appointment will be cancelled and will need to be rescheduled. This directive was made because of the pandemic and, at this time, no exceptions will be made.

The staff and physician fit testing pathway follows an algorithm and work standards have been created to assist with this process. Please note: those who do not fit into any of the current NIOSH approved N95 disposable respirators may be fitted for an elastomeric reusable respirator with appropriate filtration cartridges. This final option is by exception only and will be acceptable use for those in critical roles (where elastomeric has been deemed safe and appropriate) and/or who fail fit testing for all other models and cannot be accommodated.

Being in the room during an AGMP

During the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative that the following issues be considered regarding AGMP.

- The first question for each clinical team performing AGMPs is to resolve '*what is the minimum number of team members needed to safely do the procedure?*'
 - The answer to this is dependent on the setting and type of AGMP.
 - Adhering to this minimum number will minimize staff exposure.
- *The next item to resolve is patient flow.* It is essential that any clinical team involved in such procedures resolve this question prior to performing an AGMP.
 - This will then inform the flow of the patient to and from the location of the AGMP.





It is highly recommended that all clinical teams involved in AGMP map out the flow of their patient population to allow for infection control safeguards to be put in place prior to a procedure being done and to facilitate appropriate allocation of PPE to their team.

Updated Documents:

The following items have recently been updated on the the saskatchewan.ca/covid19 Information for Health Care Providers site website:

- [AGMP List with Risk Stratification Algorithm](#)
- [Pregnancy and COVID Rapid Update](#)
- [Continuous Use PPE Guidelines](#)