

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
COVID-19 Department of Health memo from March 22
Distributed: March 23, 2020

COVID-19 – Personal Protective Equipment for Infection, Prevention and Control

Dear Colleague,

This letter is to ensure that the appropriate level of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is being used by all health care staff within Horizon Health Network, Vitalite NB, Extramural/Ambulance NB (EM/ANB) and Social Development (long term care facilities) regarding COVID-19.

The Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) endorses the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) document “Infection prevention and control for coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Interim guidance for acute healthcare settings”. The guidance is also applicable to those settings within the community, and home settings.

This PHAC infection prevention and control guidance recommends the following:
In addition to routine practices, health care workers at risk of exposure to an individual presenting with signs and symptoms and exposure criteria consistent with COVID-19 should follow contact and droplet precautions.

This includes the appropriate selection and use of personal protective equipment: gloves, gown and facial protection: medical/procedural mask and eye protection, or face shield, or surgical/procedural mask with visor attachment.

An N95 respirator (plus eye protection), gloves and gown when performing aerosol-generating medical procedures (AGMPs) on a person under investigation (PUI) for COVID-19.

AGMP include tracheal intubation, non-invasive ventilation, tracheotomy, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, manual ventilation before intubation, and bronchoscopy. Hand hygiene should be performed whenever indicated, paying particularly attention to during and after removal of PPE, and after leaving the patient care environment.

Everyone has a role to play to reduce the impacts of COVID-19. Our health system plays an essential role in the stewardship of our supply and responsible use of PPE to ensure that healthcare workers have appropriate PPE when needed for specific medical procedures.

Following the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) guidance produced by PHAC's National Advisory Committee will allow our health system to protect both our healthcare workers and the health of Canadians. Effective IPC is about the right use, at the right time, in the right way of multiple measures, including PPE, as a key line of defense.

Therefore, all health care staff within acute care, community and home settings should continue to practice as per their routine policy for IPC and for situations where COVID-19 is suspected; implement droplet contact precautions.

There are basic steps a health care organization can take to help prevent the introduction or spread of viral infections like COVID-19:

- Reinforce routine handwashing and respiratory etiquette.
- Follow routine environmental cleaning and disinfection policies paying extra attention to high touch surfaces and use appropriate cleaners.

Ensure staff are informed of latest information.

For more information on the coronavirus www.gnb.ca/coronavirus.