

COMMUNITY CARE

Frequently Asked Questions

April 15, 2020

Q. Does “extended use” of masks apply to both surgical masks and N95 masks?

A. The current recommendation is to wear masks and eye protection for duration of shift, and to change masks if they are visibly soiled, wet, damaged, or when going on break. This is applicable for both surgical and N95 masks. However, it can be difficult to breathe through N95 masks. Therefore, if staff are finding it difficult to wear N95 masks for extended periods of time, they may doff and then apply a new surgical mask.

Q. If staff takes their break in staff room that is on the unit, would it be recommended that they continue using the same mask?

A. No. Staff should perform hand hygiene and doff mask before entering staff room, and then don a new mask before returning to patient care areas. Eye protective wear should be doffed, cleaned, disinfected and stored in plastic bag for future use before proceeding to staff room. See [IPAC guidelines to clean and disinfect eye protection](#). Maintain social distancing in staff room when possible.

Q. What are the recommendations on how staff can drink water during shift, while on the unit?

A. We encourage staff to minimize touching and manipulating the masks, as they may risk self-contaminating. To drink water, staff should perform hand hygiene, doff and discard mask, perform hand hygiene, drink water, and then don a new mask.

Q. What are recommendations for masks that are observed to be sitting on counters, worn around necks and around hairlines, because staff is needing a break from wearing the masks?

A. Masks should never be worn in any of these ways or found sitting on counters as they lead to risk of self-contamination or contamination of surfaces, respectively. The masks should stay properly donned for the duration of shifts unless they are visibly soiled, wet, damaged, or when going on breaks. If needed, staff should doff and discard masks following the appropriate doffing steps, and then don a new mask. Never reapply a used mask.

Q. If staff is working in tight spaces of each other, should they wear PPEs?

A. The current PPE guidelines are for staff when providing direct patient care. The most important way to reduce infection risk is frequent hand hygiene, and staying home when sick. Physical and social distancing should be practiced, but should not be considered a barrier or impede an employee’s ability to complete work duties.

April 7, 2020

Q. How long does the virus survive for on hard surfaces?

A. Evidence to date suggests that the virus may remain viable for a few hours to several days, depending on the type of surface, temperature, or humidity. The virus responds well to routine cleaning and disinfecting practices. This is why frequent hand hygiene and wiping down surfaces is recommended. Follow [IPAC recommendations for Environmental Cleaning](#).

Q. Can LORIS wipes or 70% isopropyl alcohol wipes be used to clean and disinfect goggles?

A. Alcohol wipes are not recommended to clean and disinfect goggles. Staff is recommended to follow [IPAC guidelines to clean and disinfect eye protection](#). Should backorders of regularly approved products occur, supply chain will provide information to an approved equivalent.

Q. May staff use masks and eye protection other than those provided by VCH?

A. Use of PPE obtained outside of supply chain should be directed to Occupational Health and Safety. Please contact OH&S advisor via email at employeesafety@vch.ca or by find their contact information [here](#).

Q. What are the directives for mask use in Community settings?

A.

- Don (put on) mask at beginning of shift.
- Do not need to change masks between clients, regardless of their infectious status.
- Avoid touching mask unnecessarily. Perform hand hygiene after touching mask.
- Change mask if it is visibly soiled, damp, or damaged for safe use.
- Change mask if you need to drink or eat, or if you have a long break in between clients. Follow VCH [PPE doffing guidelines](#), eat/drink, then [don PPE](#) before returning to patient care.

Q. What are the recommendations for sites that have curtains, but unable to facilitate changing curtains between clients?

A. Contact with textiles has not been implicated in the transmission of the virus. No special precautions are recommended; routine practices are sufficient. Handle soiled linen with minimal agitation and place directly in linen bag without sorting. Do not overfill bags.

Q. How should paper that is required to be brought into clients' homes be managed?

A. Risk of transferring organisms on non-soiled paper is low. Follow IPAC guidelines to [management of paper and plastic binders in patient care environments](#).

April 3, 2020

Q. How is "direct care" defined in Community?

A. At this time, anyone within 2 meter distance of clients can be considered providing "direct care" and requires appropriate PPE

Q. Should PPE be disposed of using hazardous waste bags?

A. No. Regular waste stream is sufficient.

Q. What are the guidelines regarding providing clients with masks when attending clinics or similar care spaces?

A. Complete screening/risk assessment first. If client is symptomatic and in a public space, advise client to perform hand hygiene, then offer a mask and place the client in an isolated area (e.g. private room with a door, exam space with closed curtains, or exam space with 2 metres around the client).

Q. What are the associated risks with wearing contaminated clothes into the car? Are there risks to contracting COVID-19 through car upholstery?

A. For clients who do not have COVID-19 symptoms, the baseline risk of transmission to clothing is very low. For those who are symptomatic /confirmed COVID-19 clients, staff are to don PPE including gown. This is effective in preventing transmission to the worker's

clothes. The upholstery of the car is also not in direct contact with symptomatic /confirmed COVID-19 infected clients, making it an extremely low risk surface.

Q. Is daily laundry necessary to stop the spread of the virus?

A. Daily laundry is not necessary to stop the spread of the virus. Staff can put their work clothes in a plastic bag. Multiple days' worth of clothes can be put in the same bag and then be washed together at the soonest convenient time. The general risk associated with putting work clothes in a common hamper is extremely low.