

COVID-19 Omicron PPE GUIDANCE, V2 Jan, 7, 2022

Given the undetermined impact of the Omicron variant, the interim recommended PPE when providing any direct care for patients with suspect or confirmed COVID-19* includes:

When providing direct care to patients with **No Suspicion or Confirmation of COVID-19:**

- When providing direct care to other patients (no suspicion or confirmation of COVID-19), recommended PPE is a medical grade mask and eye protection.
- **Double masking is acceptable if people prefer.**
- **N95s are not recommended for these situations as they are more difficult to comply with and only offer minimal added protection compared to medical mask or double masks.**

When providing direct care to patients **with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19:**

- A fit-tested, seal-checked N95 respirator (or equivalent), eye protection, gown, and gloves.

OR

- Two well-fitted surgical/medical masks, eye protection, gown and gloves.

OR

- A non-fit tested respirator, eye protection, gown and gloves (perform a mask fit check).

***Patients with suspect COVID 19 are those with symptoms of COVID 19 who are being tested or planned for COVID 19 testing based on symptoms or exposure.**

As always, we ask that you perform a Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA) to determine the best PPE for you in any specific situation.

If you do choose to wear an N95 respirator, fit testing is very important. Health PEI is rolling out more fit testing across the organization to facilitate this. Priority for fit testing are those staff with direct patient contact. Attached is a schedule for your awareness of fit testing happen over the coming weeks.

When performing **Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMPs):**

Fit tested N95 respirators (or equivalent) should be used when aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMPs) are performed or anticipated to be performed on patients with suspect or confirmed COVID-19.

Conserving Our Supply:

We have a good supply of N95s but considering the speed of the spread of Omicron variant, we know this can quickly change and we want to ensure we are being responsible. For this reason, we will be adopting a N95 respirator extended use policy. We are asking staff to use one N95 respirator pre mealtime break during a shift, then replacing it after meal break for remainder of shift. For longer shifts (i.e. 12 hours) that have two meal breaks, replace N95 respirator after each meal break.

Note: These recommendations are interim and will be re-evaluated as more information on the Omicron variant emerges.

FAQs:

How do I know if I've had an exposure?

The biggest question to ask yourself is "Was I wearing appropriate PPE?". If the answer is yes, then you are not considered an exposure even if you are in close contact with someone who is a confirmed COVID 19 positive case.

This is why, it is important to wear PPE around your coworkers and patients. Remember the majority of COVID 19 outbreaks in healthcare facilities have been linked to worker to worker exposure.

When I am at my biggest risk?

Your biggest risk point is when you remove your PPE (usually to eat or drink). Remember to sanitize your hands before eating and remain socially distanced from anyone else while eating. Also, it is important not share food with coworkers. If you want to treat your coworkers be sure to provide treats that are individually packaged.

How do I get Fit Tested?

If you do choose to wear an N95 respirator, fit testing is very important. Health PEI is rolling out more fit testing across the organization to facilitate this. Priority for fit testing are those staff with direct patient contact. Attached is a schedule for your awareness of fit testing happen over the coming weeks.

How do I perform a Point of Care Risk Assessment (PCRA)?

Please see the documents below for guidance. Note: these documents can be found anytime on the Infection Prevention and Control section of our Staff Resources page).

[Point of Care Risk Assessment.pdf \(healthpei.ca\)](#)

[Point of Care Risk Assessment Algorithm Poster.pdf \(healthpei.ca\)](#)

How do I perform a Mask Fit Check?

- Check for gaps by cupping your hands around the outside edges of the mask. Make sure no air is flowing from the area near your eyes or from the sides of the mask.
- If the mask has a good fit, you will feel warm air come through the front of the mask and may be able to see the mask material move in and out with each breath.



How do I know if I need to be Fit Tested?

If you work directly with patients and have not been fit tested in the last 2 years or if you have experienced any changes that may affect the fit of the respirator (i.e. weight loss/gain, dental changes or cosmetic surgery) you should be fit tested.

Once I have been Fit Tested, should I start wearing N95s?

No, as always you should complete a Point of Care Risk Assessment to determine the correct PPE to wear.

Where can I get additional PPE?

Your Manager can provide you with access to the PPE you need.