



COVID-19 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Last Updated: 3/20/2020

As part of the District’s continued effort to mitigate the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), keeping our clients, staff and providers safe is the top priority for the DC Department of Human Services (DHS). Below is guidance for you and your staff on who needs Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for their day-to-day tasks and how to effectively use the PPE. We have also included links to additional guidance and training videos. Staff should use the supplies link [HERE](#), to request PPE for your program and staff.

Please be aware that this guidance is based on the best information currently available and will be updated as needed. DC Health may change its recommendations as the situation evolves and will announce if additional measures are needed.

Please contact dhs.covid19@dc.gov for additional questions or see coronavirus.dc.gov for more information.

1. How is COVID-19 spread?

[According to the CDC](#), the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person:

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes

These droplets can land in the mouth or nose of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

2. What is Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?

PPE may include, but isn’t limited to, gloves, masks, gowns, goggles or biohazard bags. PPE is used to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

3. Who should wear a protective mask?

Facemasks are thought to reduce the risk of infection when worn by sick individuals with a cough. Anyone who is feeling sick should be given a mask to wear.

Facemasks do not prevent healthy people from becoming infected with a respiratory illness, such as COVID-19. The [guidance from the World Health Organization](#) is that if you do not have any respiratory symptoms, such as fever, cough, or runny nose, you do not need to wear a medical mask.

Facemasks are not an alternative to social distancing and are not recommend as such by DC Health. Facemasks are only advised for individuals with a cough and fever, in addition to other hygiene best practices. When used alone, masks can give you a false feeling of protection and can even be a source of infection when not used correctly.



4. Who should wear protective gloves?

All staff who come into physical contact with clients or client belongings should wear protective gloves. The purpose of protective gloves is to help the person wearing the gloves not to touch their face – it is NOT to keep germs off of skin. COVID-19 is not spread through skin contact. (See questions #1. **How is COVID-19 spread?** for more information.) Staff should not touch their face while wearing gloves; gloves will not be effective if a person continues to touch their face while wearing gloves.

5. How often should gloves be changed?

Staff should take off their gloves and dispose of them each time they take a break, go to the bathroom, or switch tasks to do something else; every time an individual would wash their hands, they should change their gloves. Staff should not touch their face while wearing gloves; gloves will not be effective if a person continues to touch their face while wearing gloves. Staff do not need to remove gloves each time they come into contact with a client. Gloves should be disposed of after each use. After gloves are removed, staff should wash their hands.

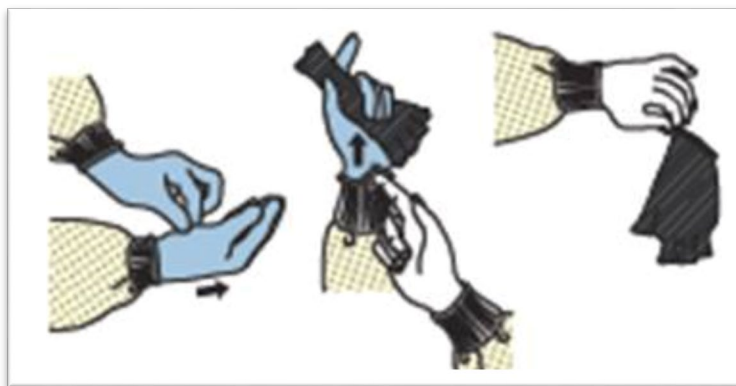
EXAMPLE: A Security Guard is searching client belongings does not need to take off their gloves after searching each client's, but can continue to wear the same pair of gloves until the guard takes a break or stops to do something else. At that point, the guard should remove the gloves, dispose of them, and then wash their hands.

6. How to take off protective gloves:

- Using a gloved hand, grasp the palm area of the other gloved hand and peel off first glove
- Hold removed glove in gloved hand
- Slide fingers of ungloved hand under remaining glove at wrist and peel off second glove over first glove
- Discard gloves in a waste container

If your hands get contaminated during glove removal, immediately wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

[Video: Proper Disposable Glove Removal](#)





7. What other protective measures can staff take?

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- **Practice social distancing** - maintain at least 6 feet between yourself and other people.

[Video: How to Wash Your Hands Like A Surgeon](#)

8. Who needs PPE and what should they wear?

- *Security Staff*: Should wear protective gloves
- *Staff who have physical contact with clients + belongings*: Should wear protective gloves
- *Cleaning staff*: Should continue to wearing their usual protective equipment, including protective gloves
- *Staff Conducting Non-Medical Screening*: No PPE required, staff should maintain the CDC guidance to practice social distancing – maintain at least 6 feet between yourself and other people.