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| COVID-19 – A guide to the conventional use of personal protective equipment (PPE)  Updated 29 July 2021 |
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This document was updated on 29 July 2021. To help you see what has changed since the last version, all content updates are highlighted in yellow and summarised in the table below.

**Updates**

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| **Version/Date** | **Changes** |
| V1, 3 February 2021 | The guidance has been updated to clarify which patients/clients are considered high-risk suspected cases of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the current setting in Victoria. |
| V2, 14 February 2021 | The guidance has been updated to reflect the increased risks of COVID-19 transmission in Victoria. |
| V3, 22 February 2021 | The guidance has been updated to reflect the lowered risk of COVID-19 transmission in Victoria |
| V4, 07 June 2021 | The guidance has been updated to align with the [Victorian Health Service Guidance and Response to COVID-19 Risks (VSHGR)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks> |
| V5, 29 July 2021 | The guidance has been updated to align eye protection advice with the [Victorian Health Service Guidance and Response to COVID-19 Risks (VHSGR)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks) and to amend the High Risk Suspected (SCOVID) definition to include guidance on people who have been released from a quarantine facility (in the last 14 days) |

# Conventional use of PPE

The following guide outlines the appropriate use of PPE for the Victorian health sector during the COVID-19 pandemic response. Prescribing the correct levels of PPE, in addition to other hierarchy of controls, will ensure that healthcare workers are protected from infection. Whilst this advice is for the healthcare sector, it can be used to inform any local policy.

**Table 1** outlines the required PPE for healthcare workers based on the current public health advice.

**Table 2** provides a list of definitions and examples of application within a healthcare setting. The provided examples are not exhaustive but are intended as a guide.

Please note that other infectious diseases requiring PPE as part of transmission-based precautions are not addressed in this document.

PPE is only one element of healthcare worker protection and it is essential that the hierarchy of controls are implemented in their entirety to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

This guidance will be regularly reviewed and updated as required, including in the event of an increase in community prevalence of COVID-19.

## Associated documents

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

* [Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) – PPE and levels of protection (Word)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-ppe-and-levels-protection) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19-ppe-and-levels-protection>
* [COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guideline (Word)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid19-infection-control-guidelines) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/covid19-infection-control-guidelines>
* [Victorian Health Service Guidance and Response to COVID-19 Risks (VSHGR)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks>

Table 1: Conventional guidance

The PPE guidance has been updated to reflect patient status and reflect minimum requirements.

| TIER | For use | Graphic of hands being washed | Graphic of a pair of gloves | Graphic of apronGraphic of a long-sleeved gown | Graphic of a long-sleeved gown | Graphic of a surgical mask | Graphic of a P2/N95 respirator | Graphic of a pair of goggles Graphic of face shield |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hand hygiene | Disposable gloves | Level 1 gown and plastic apron | Disposable gown | Surgical mask | P2 / N95 respirator | Eye protection  (Goggles or face shield) |
| **Tier 0 – Standard precautions** | Currently not applicable based on public health advice. | Tick - yes | As per standard precautions | As per standard precautions | As per standard precautions | As per standard precautions | Cross - no | As per standard precautions |
| **Tier 1 –** **COVID-19 standard precautions** | Care of and exposure to all COVID-19 negative patients or clients | Tick - yes | As per standard precautions | As per standard precautions | As per standard precautions | Tick - yes  Minimum Level 1 | Cross - no | As per standard precautions\*\* |
| **Tier 2 – Droplet and contact precautions** | Care of and exposure to low-risk suspected\* COVID-19 Patients/Residents excluding patients where there is a risk of aerosol generating behaviours or an aerosol generating procedure needs to be performed | Tick - yes | Tick - yes | Tick - yes | Tick - yes  or  Level 2, 3 or 4 | Tick - yes  Level 2 or 3\* | Cross - no  \* | Tick - yes  Face shield where practical |
| **Tier 3 – Airborne and contact precautions and aerosol generating procedures** | All care/exposure/contact with:   * High Risk suspected COVD-19 Patients/Residents * Confirmed COVID-19 Patients/Residents   Providing care to low-risk suspected COVID patients where there is a risk of aerosol generating behaviours or an aerosol generating procedure needs to be performed | Tick - yes | Tick - yes | Cross - no | Tick - yes  Level 2, 3 or 4 | Cross - no | Tick - yes | Tick - yes  Face shield where practical |

\*If the risk of community transmission increases, in line with the Victorian Health Service Guidance and Response to COVID-19 Risks (VSHGR) COVID Active and COVID Peak stages, Tier 3 PPE is recommended for all exposure, care and contact with low-risk suspected COVID as well as high-risk suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19. See the [VSHGR](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/victorian-health-service-guidance-and-response-covid-19-risks#current-risk-rating

\*\* Eye protection is added to Tier 1 PPE for exposure to all COVID-19 negative patients or clients during COVID Active and COVID Peak stages. For more specific guidance on eye protection see use of eye protection for healthcare workers <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/use-of-eye-protection-healthcare-workers-covid-19-doc>

**Table 2: Definitions with examples and potential applications**

Examples of how these are intended to be applied are provided. It is intended that the examples will inform local application.

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| **Confirmed** cases of COVID-19. | 1. A person who **tests positive** to a validated SARS-CoV-2 test. | * A person contacted by public health authorities or health professional notifying them of a positive COVID-19 test result. * Have not yet been informed by public health that they have completed the required isolation period. |
| **High-risk suspected** cases of COVID-19 | 1. A person in **quarantine** for any reason (including: being a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 or a returned traveller from overseas or a relevant interstate area with outbreaks (as defined by public health in the last 14 days) with or without a compatible clinical illness. This group is also referred to as “at-risk”.   *People who have been released from a quarantine facility (in the last 14 days) but have not undertaken any post-quarantine testing (Days 17 and 21) should be tested and Tier 3 PPE should be utilised until their negative status is confirmed.*   1. A person with a **compatible clinical illness** who meets **one or more of the following epidemiological risk factors** in the 14 days prior to illness onset:    * Contact with a confirmed case or an exposure site as defined by public health    * Was employed in an area where there is an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission, for example:  * hotel quarantine workers or any workers at ports of entry * aged care workers/ healthcare workers working in a location where there are active outbreaks * other high-risk industries (such as abattoirs) where there are known cases or high levels of community transmission * Lived in or visited a geographically localised area at higher risk as determined by public health. * Has been released from a quarantine facility | * Is a close contact of a confirmed case. * Returned from international travel in the past 14 days. * A person with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 who lives in an area where there are known COVID-19 cases or outbreaks. * A healthcare worker with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 who has had direct contact or exposure with a COVID-19 patient in the last 14 days. * A person with or without symptoms consistent with COVID-19 who has been released from hotel quarantine in the last 7 days who has not undertaken any testing since Day 13. |
| **Low-risk suspected** cases of COVID-19 | 1. Have **symptoms that could be consistent with COVID-19** (for example, cough, sore throat, fever, shortness of breath or runny nose) but **no epidemiological risk factors** as listed in the high-risk definition.   *Where a patient’s history cannot be obtained, they should be considered as a low-risk suspected case until further screening information can be obtained, at which point a revised diagnosis of the patient’s condition can be made and appropriate changes to PPE implemented.* | * A person who has acute respiratory infection symptoms but no epidemiological risk factors for COVID-19. * An unconscious person who presents to an emergency department. * An unconscious person in the community. |
| **Negative** COVID-19 cases | 1. A person who **tests negative** to a validated SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid test. 2. A person who is **a cleared case.** 3. A person who **screens negative** and/or has no clinical or epidemiological risk factors for COVID-19. | * A person who has been tested and has been notified that the test is negative. * A person without compatible symptoms or potential exposure to COVID-19 in the previous 14 days, who has been screened as negative for COVID-19. |
| **Isolated** | 1. A person who is isolated is confined to their room alone. | * A person located in a healthcare facility single room with own bathroom. * A single person in a home (or area of a home). |
| **Cohorted** | 1. People who are cohorted together in a room and/or area for the same condition. | * Multiple COVID-19 positive patients cohorted in a room. * Area within an emergency department or intensive care department designated for more than one patient, with or suspected of having the same condition to be treated, managed or cared for. * Where household members reside within a house where more than one person has the same condition. |
| **Aerosol generating procedures** | 1. Procedures performed on patients are more likely to generate higher concentrations of infectious respiratory aerosols. | * Examples include bronchoscopy, tracheal intubation, non-invasive ventilation (e.g. BiPAP, CPAP), high flow nasal oxygen therapy, manual ventilation before intubation, intubation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, suctioning, sputum induction, nebuliser use. |
| **Aerosol generating behaviours** | 1. Behaviours that are more likely to generate higher concentrations of infectious respiratory aerosols. | * Persistent and/or severe coughing. * Screaming and shouting. * Women in active labour, who exhibit heavy breathing and panting. |

## References

* [Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), Case and contact management guidelines for health services and general practitioners (DHHS) (Word)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-case-and-contact-management-guidelines-health-services-and-general-practitioners) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-case-and-contact-management-guidelines-health-services-and-general-practitioners>
* [COVID-19 healthcare worker PPE guidance (DH)](file:///C:\Users\gmcc1507\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\F009JDRV\COVID-19%20healthcare%20worker%20PPE%20guidance%20(DHHS)) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19>.

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Available at: [Department of Health and Human Services Victoria | Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - coronavirus (COVID-19) (dhhs.vic.gov.au)](https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19) <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-covid-19>