

Standard Operational Procedure

COVID-19 disease

Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The aim of this Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) is support staff on the measures and interventions to minimise the risk of infection transmission in the work and healthcare environment.

Preventative measures for COVID-19 disease

Based on the available evidence, the COVID-19 virus is transmitted between people through close contact and droplets, not by airborne transmission. The people most at risk of infection are those who are in close contact.

Preventative and mitigation measures are key in both healthcare and community settings. The most effective preventative measures include:

- Performing hand hygiene using soap and water frequently
- If hands are not visibly dirty and hand washing facilities are not available, then use a hand sanitiser
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Practicing respiratory hygiene by either coughing or sneezing into a bent elbow or tissue and then immediately disposing of the tissue ('Catch it, kill it, bin it')
- Maintaining social distance (a minimum of 1- 2 m) from individuals with respiratory symptoms

Additional precautions are required by healthcare workers to protect themselves and prevent transmission. Precautions include using PPE appropriately. This involves selecting and correctly fitting (donning) PPPE, and correctly removing (doffing) PPE, disposing it as Category B clinical waste.

PPE is only one effective measure. The World Health Organisation (WHO) summarised the controls as;

- **Administrative** – ensuring the availability of resources for infection prevention control, such as appropriate infrastructure, clear infection prevention control policies, appropriate triage and placement of patients
- **Environmental** – aiming to reduce the spread of pathogens and reducing the contamination of surfaces and in animate objects. They include providing adequate space to allow social distance of at least 1 to 2 m between the patient and healthcare worker (according to the purpose of the contact) and ensuring rooms are well ventilated.

In view of the global challenges to maintain supplies of PPE, its use should be based on the risk of exposure and rationalised appropriately.

Table 1 provides the recommended type of PPE to be used in the context of COVID-19 in general practice.

Setting	Target personnel or patients	Activity	Type of PPE or procedure
Reception	Patients	Includes receiving patients for appointments, managing enquiries, accepting specimens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain spatial distance of 1-2m • No PPE required
Triage	Healthcare workers	Preliminary screening not involving direct contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain spatial distance of at least 1-2 m. • No PPE required
Administrative areas	All staff, including healthcare workers	Administrative tasks that do not involve contact with patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No PPE required
Consultation room	Healthcare workers	Physical examination of patient with respiratory symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fluid repellent surgical mask (FRSM) • Apron • Gloves
		Physical examination of patients without respiratory symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPE according to standard precautions and risk assessment
	Patient with respiratory symptoms	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide medical mask if tolerated
	Patient without respiratory symptoms	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No PPE required

Waiting room	Patients with respiratory symptoms	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide FRSM if tolerated • Immediately move the patient to an isolation room
	Patients without respiratory symptoms	Any	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No PPE required
	Cleaners	Deep cleaning post isolated patient with respiratory symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FRSM • Gloves • Apron

Putting on and removing personal protective equipment (PPE)

This PPE ensemble is enhanced using a FRSM due to COVID-2019 being a novel coronavirus and the evidence base for transmission limited. Therefore, this is based on expert opinion to date and may be revised as the situation evolves.

Use safe work practices to protect yourself and limit the spread of infection:

- keep hands away from face and PPE being worn
- change gloves if torn or heavily contaminated
- limit surfaces touched in the patient environment
- regularly perform hand hygiene
- always clean hands after removing gloves

Pre-donning instructions:

- ensure healthcare worker hydrated
- tie hair back
- bare below the elbows
- check PPE - the correct size of gloves available

The order for donning:

- perform hand hygiene
- put on apron
- FRSM – ensure this is well fitted to gain the maximum benefit of protection
- Gloves

Doffing

The order for removal minimises the potential for cross contamination. PPE is to be removed in a systematic way as follows:

Gloves

- Grasp the outside of the glove with the opposite gloved hand; peel off
- Hold the removed glove in gloved hand
- Slide the fingers of the un-gloved hand under the remaining glove at the wrist
- Peel the remaining glove off over the first glove and discard
- Clean hands with hand sanitiser

Apron

- Unfasten waist ties
- Break the apron at the back of the neck
- Pull apron away touching only the inside of the apron
- Roll or fold the apron in a manner keeping the apron inside out and discard into clinical waste
- Clean hands with hand sanitiser

Mask

- Do not touch the front as it will be contaminated
- Lean forward slightly
- With both hands find the bottom retaining strap to untie and lift the top strap over the top of the head ensuring this falls away from your face and place in the clinical waste bin
- Wash hands with soap and water

(attached/appended: NHS Scotland poster, Example of an Isolation Policy for General Practice)

References for further information

World Health Organization: Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) (Interim guidance 27 February 2020)

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331215/WHO-2019-nCov-IPCPPE_use-2020.1-eng.pdf

Public Health England. COVID-19: guidance for primary care

Harrogate resources for General Practices

<https://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/gp-practices>