



# When to Use Personal Protection Equipment

## WHY YOU NEED PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The coronavirus causing COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) passes easily from a person with infection to another person by:

- Close personal direct contact, for example, shaking hands or kissing.
- Direct contact with respiratory droplets of a sick person who coughs, sneezes, or possibly talks/sings nearby; through sharing food, cups, glasses, dishes, and cutlery. Respiratory droplets can spread up to 2 metres after a person coughs or sneezes.
- Indirect contact, for example, touching something with the virus on it like doorknobs, cellphones or other frequently touched objects, then touching your face before washing your hands.

Most times COVID-19 passes from one person to another when a person is sick and experiencing symptoms. Even people who do not have any symptoms at all can pass the virus to others.

## HOW TO CONTROL THE SPREAD

**Engineering Controls:** The preferred way to isolate workers is to use engineering controls in the workplace. Engineering controls are physical barriers that prevent contact between people. For example, grocery stores have put plastic shields in front of cashiers.

**Administrative Controls:** When it's not possible to physically isolate people from the risk with engineering controls, then we can change the way people work. This could include practices such as increasing hand washing and cleaning schedules, increasing space between workers or changing shifts so there are fewer people working at the same time. This is similar to people being asked to avoid gatherings, stay home and not have any visitors in their homes.

**Personal Protective Equipment:** As a last resort, when it's not possible to avoid the risk of COVID-19 by staying at least 2 metres away from people who do not live in your home or other methods, PPE should be worn. PPE is most necessary in health care settings, and includes face masks, eye protection, gowns, and gloves. Employers are responsible for ensuring that any workers who use PPE receive training around proper wearing, removal, use, and disposal.

## TYPES OF PPE

### Face Masks

There are three types of face masks:

**N95 Respirators** – these masks should only be used in a health care setting by health care professionals doing tasks where there is a higher risk of producing very small infectious particles, or in an industrial setting where people doing essential work routinely use these masks to do their jobs.

**Surgical Masks/Medical Masks** – these masks are used in health care settings and other places where people are close to each other and need to avoid spreading germs from themselves to another person. They stop germs from contacting your nose or mouth, and stop you from passing germs on to other people.

**Non-Medical Masks/Facial Coverings** – The Chief Public Health Officer has recommended that people wear non-medical face masks (i.e. facial coverings) to limit the spread of COVID-19 when they are out in the community. These masks can be made at home with almost any kind of cloth. They cover your mouth and nose. They can stop germs from contacting your nose or mouth and stop you from passing germs on to others, but may not be as effective as medical masks.

#### **Eye Protection**

Eye protection is important in some situations where there is a need to protect a person's eyes from another person's respiratory droplets. Eye protection includes facial shields and protective eye wear (not just eyeglasses or sunglasses).

#### **Gowns and gloves**

Gowns and gloves can protect the person wearing them from infectious droplets coming in contact with their clothes or hands.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Global demand for PPE is high and supplies are currently limited. That is why it is important for everyone to conserve and extend their current supply of PPE so we can keep our workers and communities healthy and safe. Health care workers on the front lines will always have first priority for allocation of PPE so they remain capable of providing critical health services to the people of the NWT.

**All employers in the NWT who are providing essential services are required to conduct a workplace risk assessment for their employees.** The Workers Safety and Compensation Commission of the NWT provides resources on its website: <https://www.wscc.nt.ca/health-safety/covid-19/forms>. Completing these forms will give you further information with respect to what measures are necessary to protect your workers.

**Employers and workers may also contact the WSCC directly for guidance on usage of PPE and assistance with risk assessments.** To have an OHS Inspector assist with your risk assessment, email [Covid-19@wscc.nt.ca](mailto:Covid-19@wscc.nt.ca) or call Toll-Free: **(800) 661-0792** to speak with an Inspector.

The world is learning more about how COVID-19 spreads all the time. Information and advice about usage and preservation of PPE will be updated by the Public Health Agency of Canada and the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) in the NWT.

The OCPHO has developed a document that provides additional guidance about [Personal Protective Equipment Use in NWT during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The OCPHO has also developed a video that shows how to wear and care for face masks  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb1tscZ5\\_YQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb1tscZ5_YQ).