

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Health PEI staff and physicians, Executive Leadership Team, and Leadership Forum
FROM: COVID-19 Joint Response Team
DATE: April 5, 2020
SUBJECT: Saving and repurposing of N95 masks / PPE conservation

Retaining N95 masks

Please be advised that as of today, April 5, all N95 masks must be retained after use and safely secured and stored. Evidence suggests these masks may be reusable. UPEI is undertaking research to assess sterilization procedures and there is other research underway across Canada that may require these masks.

The N95 masks should be placed in marked biohazard bags and kept in a secure area once they are removed from units, where they are to be kept on-site until plans to retrieve them are in place.

Staff who pick up laundry and garbage need to know where these masks are to be secured to ensure they are not accidentally thrown out.

Biohazard stickers must be placed on containers where the N95 masks are dropped off by staff. Please print and use the attached signs on orange paper.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Conservation of PPE

In the coming days a protocol will be implemented for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) conservation and supply. As the pandemic continues to progress in Eastern Canada there are increasing numbers of cases in surrounding provinces as well as evidence of community spread in Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. We are expecting the same will occur in PEI.

There is no doubt that health care providers are the most important resource to be able to care for Islanders during the pandemic. We are caring for a vulnerable patient population, and it is up to us to help keep them and each other safe. Wearing a mask reduces risk of staff with very early symptomatic infection from spreading disease to others, and may prevent transmission from unrecognized patients to staff.

This will be approached in several ways:

- Physicians, nurses, and allied health care providers, who work in acute or long-term care clinical areas where they have direct, hands-on patient contact, may be asked to wear a **procedure mask** throughout their shift. The **Appendix** provides information on how this will be done safely. Tracey Diamond will review this process with our Infection Prevention and Control team starting this week. Specific direction to units and sites will be coming later this week.

- Only essential staff will enter patient's rooms and be present for aerosol generating medical procedures (AGMPs)
- The maximum number of tasks will be done while in the patient's room.
- Tasks may be done from the patient's door when it is safe to do so (i.e. daily rounds, determining if a PRN medication has been effective, etc.)
- Other strategies to extend the use of PPE safely will be used (i.e. re-use of specific items)

The purpose of these conservation measures are:

- 1) To provide appropriate PPE to protect valuable health care workers
- 2) To prevent a shortage or exhaust of our supply of facemasks, N95 respirators and eye/facial protection.
- 3) To ensure necessary supplies are available when a patient's clinical status indicates.

If we all work together, we will reduce our risk, and ensure we have the right equipment, for the right patient, at the right time.

See attachment below for *Extended use of PPE for Health Care Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic*

Appendix

Extended use of PPE for Health Care Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Extended use refers to the practice of wearing the same procedure/surgical mask or N95 mask for repeated encounters with several patients, without removing them between encounters. Extended use may be implemented when caring for multiple patients with the same suspected/confirmed respiratory pathogen and patients are in the same clinical area (i.e. unit, clinics, etc.).

Masks, including N95 masks, may be worn for extended periods of time as long as the mask:

- has not been worn during an aerosol generating medical procedure (AGMP)
- has not reached end of use by becoming wet or damaged
- is not difficult to breathe through

A disposable face mask may be worn for hours as long as it is not wet or distorted and not touched while delivering patient care. During patient care, take care to NOT TOUCH your mask or facial/eye protection.

Full Face Shields or Goggles – To be worn when clinically indicated (Droplet or Airborne Isolation Precautions) and in addition to the clinically indicated mask. Face shields and goggles are NOT to be shared among staff.

Face shields can be worn for a single shift as long as the following occurs:

- the face shield is labelled prior to being used with the health care provider's name; and
- they are disinfected after use and prior to being placed in a proper storage container (i.e. labelled paper bag).

Goggles may be worn for more than one shift as long as the following occurs:

- the goggles are labelled with the health care provider's name;
- they are disinfected after use and prior to being placed in a proper storage container (i.e. labelled paper bag); and
- they are kept in a secured area to prevent contamination while the health care provider is not working.

Face shield and goggles cleaning/disinfecting process:

- Complete hand hygiene
- Don clean gloves
- If the equipment is soiled, clean with soap and water prior to disinfection
- Disinfect all of the equipment (interior and exterior excluding the foam and elastics) with Oxivir (or substitute)
- Ensure adequate contact time for the cleaner/disinfectant
- Equipment may be rinsed with tap water if the visibility is compromised by the cleaner/disinfectant
- Once equipment is dry, place directly in labelled storage container
- Remove gloves
- Complete hand hygiene
- Take storage container to identified storage area