

# **PPE Tips: Know These Clinical Pearls to Reduce Your Risk of Infection**

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## **PPE Basics:**

- PPE should not be worn in public spaces. It is not a costume or badge of honor.
- When in PPE, you will have limited access to items in your pockets such as phones, pagers, or pens. Isolation room should have dedicated pens and other needed items available. Pages and phone calls can wait.
- PPE is a tool you use to keep yourself safe. It is a non-disease specific barrier. It is not meant to keep you free from a disease. This is clearly claimed by FDA.
- It is not simply to be worn because the door sign says so.

## **Gloves and gowns**

### **Gown Basics:**

- Tie all ties on the gown. When you lean over a bed for a task or procedure, the gown will not be held close to your body. This also leaves your backside exposed in the room.
- Make sure the gown fits you. If it doesn't, work with your employer to find a gown that will meet your needs. Many isolation gowns are considered one size fits all and they simply do not.
- Gowns should not be worn as a jacket or coat.

### **Glove Basics:**

- Glove-in-glove technique is a good practice for glove use in both standard precautions and transmission-based precautions. Removing the first glove in an inverted fashion and then enclosing it in the second glove also inverted contains any soiled surfaces of the gloves which is safer for both the providers and those who will manage the trash at a later time.

### **Fabric gowns:**

- The behavior common with fabric gowns is tying it loosely around the neck to allow for simply throwing the gown over the head. This is often done to ease doffing, where the gown is removed over the head putting the face close or in contact with a very likely contaminated component of the gown. This also can result in the gown going to laundry with the tie in place.

Once laundered, that tie will likely become a knot, reinforcing the likelihood of another over the head decision. Snaps or a button of some kind might be an option to discuss with manufacturers.

- People who employ the “over the head” option often also neglect the waist tie.

#### **Disposable gowns:**

- Breaking ties: This is noted as an acceptable process in the CDC guidance, but it should remain slow and intentional. Gowns can be torn with gentle motions. Consider gentle breaking motions from the shoulders instead of popping the gown by grabbing the chest. Ties can be thin and easy to break away, or they can be pretty durable. If breaking the ties routinely results in bundling difficulties, consider either untying to remove or finding a different product/manufacturer.
- If an all-at-once gown and glove removal is a challenge for your providers to keep the clean side encapsulated in the bundle, another option is to remove the gloves, pull the clean sleeves (they were under the glove cuff) over your hands, and then use your hands under the sleeves to pinch the gown for removal.

#### **Masks and respirators:**

##### **Masks:**

- Nosepiece should be fitted to the nose, not just bent or tented.
- Masks should be extended under the chin.
- Covering mouth alone is not appropriate.
- Ear loop masks should not be stored “under the chin” until they are needed.
- No mask is a fashionable necklace.

##### **Masks with integrated eye protection:**

- These are hard to apply sometimes as your fingers must form the nose clip to the face without distorting or bending the face shield.
- These masks will protect eyes from splatter in front of you but may not provide protection as well from above.

##### **N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirator:**

- Applying an N95 respirator requires a lot of facial touching, so hand hygiene before and after that process is important.
- Hand hygiene before and after N95 removal is also important to limit fomite transfer.
- Strap position should be limited to:
  - Crown of head (top)
  - Base of neck under hair (bottom)
- Seal checks often go undone.

- Bare hands are best to perform the seal check.
- Adjustment should be avoided once the AIIR room or area for patient care is entered.
- Only respirator straps should be touched while doffing. Limit touching a dirty respirator.

### **Eye protection:**

#### **Goggles:**

- Probably the best coverage, but fogging is common.

#### **Eyewear:**

- Z87 impact ratings do not guarantee splash protection. Coverage is better on sides. Currently our hospital encourages this, because it is better than nothing.
- Corrective lenses should not be considered protecting the eyes.

#### **Face shield:**

- Provides full face coverage
- If wearing head covers and full protection is important, ensure no gaps between head cover and face shield headband.
- Face shields are challenging in outdoor environments because the wind can make them unstable on the face.