

MARCH 24, 2020

HEALTH ADVISORY

Infection Control Guidance and Recommendations

Guidance for the Routine Use of Surgical Masks and Gloves

The NDDoH continues to recommend that health care providers follow [CDC guidance for personal protective equipment \(PPE\)](#) when seeing patients with suspected COVID-19 and those with respiratory symptoms. This is especially important when conducting aerosolizing procedures.

Due to local areas of community spread of COVID-19 being identified in North Dakota and limited testing that has been conducted, the NDDoH requests that consideration be given to health care workers (HCWs) wearing surgical masks for routine non-respiratory patient care. Implementation of a policy like this may reduce the risk of inadvertent exposures and reduce the number of health care workers who may need to be furloughed.

- To help preserve supplies, review your institution's policies on PPE equipment, and strongly consider implementing [strategies for optimizing and extending the use of PPE supplies](#).
- If supply is sufficient, consider having HCWs wear surgical masks for all other routine patient care. Consideration should be given to wearing a single mask through the whole day.
 - Adhere to proper donning and doffing, avoid touching the front of mask and wearing around neck.
 - Masks should be stored in individual paper bags and labeled with name.
 - Hand hygiene should be performed before and after donning of re-used mask.
 - Discard the mask only if it becomes soiled or if known contact with COVID-19 patient.
- Reinforce good hand hygiene for all patient encounters (foam in, foam out).
 - HCWs could consider gloving for patient care and changing gloves between patients depending on the supplies and policies of their institutions.
- Sanitize exam room between each patient

Routine Screening Form for Health Care Workers

The NDDoH recommends that health care facilities implement restrictive policies for staff and travel. Additionally, facilities should screen workers daily for fever and other symptoms of COVID-19. The NDDoH Health Care Worker Screening Protocol, which is attached to this HAN and can be found on the [website](#), may be used by facilities as a tool to conduct screening. Facilities may also use their own screening protocol.

Guidance for Health Care Worker Exposures

For health care workers who have had a short-duration, unprotected exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case, facilities may elect to have that provider work. Facilities should consider the following:

- If a HCW is unmasked and without eye protection and is within 6 feet of a COVID-positive patient, without having contact with that patient's secretions, for 15 minutes or less, that health care worker may stay on job, wearing a mask for 7 days, with twice daily temperature checks and symptom evaluation for 14 days.
 - If the health care worker develops a temperature of $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$ F or subjective fever, chills, cough, sore throat, new onset myalgias or new onset fatigue, shortness of breath, the worker should immediately mask, remove themselves from patient care, and contact their infection prevention program before presenting to their healthcare provider for evaluation.
- If a HCW is unmasked and without eye protection and is within 6 feet of COVID positive patient for greater than 15 minutes or if less than 15 minutes, but was directly exposed to secretions, then the health care worker should be furloughed and quarantined for 14 days.
- Infection control and/or occupational health should be notified of all potential exposures.

Travel Guidance for Health Care Workers

The NDDoH has drafted guidance for health care workers who have recently traveled or who have travel plans. This guidance is available on the NDDoH COVID-19 [website](#).

For questions related to COVID-19, healthcare providers can call the NDDoH Division of Disease Control at COVID-19 hotline at 888-391-3430 Sunday through Saturday, 24/7.

Categories of Health Alert Network messages:

Health Alert Requires immediate action or attention; highest level of importance

Health Advisory May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation

Health Update Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation

HAN Info Service Does not require immediate action; provides general public health information