



Transforming Lives. Building Community Well-Being.

## STRATEGIES TO LIMIT OR PRESERVE THE USE OF PPE

(Personal Protective Equipment)

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the amount of people becoming infected and sadly succumbing to the virus has increased significantly over the past month. Thus, a surge of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) use has put a strain on supply chains all over the world. [NC DHHS](#) and the [CDC](#) has recently issued new guidelines for providers to assist during shortages of PPE. While social distancing has curtailed the spread and transmission of the virus, our healthcare systems continue to provide critical services for our members daily where physical distancing is not possible.

Guidelines provided by CDC recommend providers to implement a “Hierarchy of Controls” to optimize the use of PPE. First, eliminate the risk of exposure by instituting telehealth, virtual health, or e-visits where applicable. Provisions have been made by payers to allow these visits to occur with parity (i.e., equal payment is in person services).

Second, utilize environmental controls to limit exposure to potential COVID-19 patients. If a face-to-face visit is required:

- 🌿 Plan for the visit ahead to limit the amount of time spent with the member
- 🌿 Ensure you always screen all your patients for COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath)
- 🌿 Inquire about any recent travel, specifically to “hot spots” in the US or internationally in the past two weeks
- 🌿 Ask the member have they been around anyone with known COVID-19 exposure

Any questions or concerns should be referred to the appropriate medical personnel. A useful resource is the COVID-19 nurse triage line sponsored by Community Care of North Carolina. The access line number is 1-877-490-6642.

DHHS has issued additional guidance in the document below regarding the use of PPE for providers who are in direct and indirect contact with those known or suspected of having COVID-19.

As guidelines change or become updated, Trillium Health Resources will continue to provide updates and resources for members and providers. Please refer to our website for the latest on COVID-19 at:

[www.TrilliumHealthResources.org](http://www.TrilliumHealthResources.org)

[COVID-19 Information](#)

24-Hour Access to Care Line: 1-877-685-2415



## Classification of North Carolina Issued Personal Protective Equipment\*

This document offers a series of strategies or options to optimize supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) in healthcare settings when there is limited supply. Because of a critical shortage of respiratory protection devices, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) have provided interim guidance to employers on the use of PPE.

PPE shortages are currently posing a tremendous challenge to the US healthcare system because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare facilities are having difficulty accessing the needed PPE and are having to identify alternate ways to provide patient care. [CDC's Strategies for Optimizing PPE](#) offer options for use when PPE supplies are stressed, running low, or absent.

All U.S. healthcare facilities should currently be implementing PPE contingency strategies:






- Maximize use of engineering controls, such as barriers and maintained ventilation systems, and administrative controls, such as altering work practices to minimize patient contacts.
- Cancel elective and non-urgent procedures/appointments.
- Reserve PPE for HCP and replace PPE normally used for source control with other barrier precautions such as tissues.
- Use re-usable PPE that can be reprocessed.
- Use PPE beyond the manufacturer-designated shelf life for training.
- Consider allowing HCP to extend use of respirators, facemasks, and eye protection, beyond a single patient contact.



### *Classification System for PPE*

The classification system below is to assist in making decisions on sourcing, purchasing, prioritizing, and delivering PPE to both healthcare workers and non-healthcare public service agency workers that have requested protective equipment. The classifications are presented in order of preferred use by level of protection, with Tier I and Tier II PPE being specifically designed for medical use. Tier III and Tier IV PPE are ideal for use by non-healthcare public service workers or healthcare workers when Tier I and Tier II PPE are no longer available.

**Healthcare workers should not use Tier II, III and IV PPE unless Tier I PPE is not available. As PPE becomes available, healthcare facilities should promptly resume standard practices.**

Tier I: N-95 Respirators	Tier I: Additional respirators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All N95 respirators that are approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). <b>NIOSH</b> will be somewhere on the respirator.</li> <li>A surgical N95 respirator is a NIOSH-approved N95 respirator that has also been cleared by the FDA as a surgical mask. <b>NIOSH</b> will be somewhere on the respirator.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="467 569 634 751" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="451 758 646 793" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Example of N95</i></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other NIOSH approved respirators are at least as protective as the N95. These include N99, N100, P95, P99, P100, R95, R99, and R100</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1013 394 1224 577" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="1024 611 1219 646" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Example of N99</i></p> </div>
Tier I: Surgical and procedural masks	Tier I: Other PPE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ASTM Level 1, 2, or 3 procedural and surgical masks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A <b>surgical mask</b> is used inside the operating room and it also protects the healthcare worker from contaminated fluid or debris generated during the procedure.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="391 1129 613 1352" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="347 1356 656 1392" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Example of surgical mask</i></p> </div> <li>A <b>procedure mask</b> is used for performing patient procedures and are used to protect both patients and staff from the transfer of respiratory secretions, fluids or other debris.</li> </li></ul> <div data-bbox="402 1646 597 1801" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="331 1833 672 1869" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Example of procedural mask</i></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>FDA cleared Medical gloves-</b> Nonsterile or sterile disposable patient examination gloves.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="1016 961 1224 1171" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="967 1176 1276 1211" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Example of medical glove</i></p> </div> <li><b>Isolation and surgical gowns-</b> Nonsterile, disposable patient isolation gowns are appropriate when caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.</li> <div data-bbox="1084 1444 1203 1646" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="987 1650 1305 1686" data-label="Caption"> <p><i>Example of isolation gown</i></p> </div>

Tier II: Non NIOSH approved/FDA EUA	Tier II: Other PPE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">OSHA</a>, <a href="#">FDA</a>, and the <a href="#">CDC</a> are allowing certain respirators from other countries to be used during COVID-19. They are acceptable in their country.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Example of KN95</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Non medical gloves</b>- those used for food service, embalming, cleaning, or other industrial-grade gloves.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Example of non-medical glove</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Coveralls</b>-typically provide 360-degree protection.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Example of coverall</i></p>
Tier III: Utility Mask	Tier III: Other PPE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple physical barrier for exams and visitations or for dry, short procedures that do not produce fluid, spray or aerosols. Also, dust masks that are sold at hardware stores.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Example of utility mask</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>International gowns and coveralls:</b> In times of shortages, healthcare facilities can use international gowns and coveralls that conform to international standards.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Example of Coverall from an international vendor</i></p>

Tier IV: Homemade masks	Tier IV: Other PPE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For use as a last resort for healthcare providers.</li> <li>• Homemade masks are not considered PPE, since their capability to protect HCP is unknown.</li> <li>• Healthcare providers should wear face shield with homemade mask if facility is resorting to use.</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Example of homemade mask</i></p> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a situation of severely limited or no availability, the following PPE can be used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Disposable laboratory coats</li> <li>○ Reusable (washable) patient gowns</li> <li>○ Reusable (washable) laboratory coats</li> <li>○ Disposable aprons</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p><i>Example of disposal apron</i></p> </div>

**Important Things to Know about Wearing a Mask:**

When you wear your PPE, its surface becomes contaminated by particulate, which may include viruses and bacteria. PPE may also endure wear affecting their integrity due to handling, donning/doffing processes.

Wearers should be careful how they handle PPE after it has been worn and avoid touching the contaminated area. Continued strict adherence to hand hygiene practices, particularly after touching PPE, is critical.

*\*This document has been reviewed by North Carolina Department of Labor/ Occupational Safety and Health Division on April 8, 2020.*