

Personal Protective Equipment in a Primary Health Care setting during COVID-19 (Mate korona) community outbreaks, 2021

Evidence regarding Rāhui COVID-19 is continually evolving. This position statement is a living document which is updated regularly to reflect emerging evidence.

Purpose

The purpose of this statement is to outline NZNO recommended use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Primary Health Care Settings **during an evolving community outbreak**. This statement should be read in conjunction with NZNO's Position Statement - Rāhui COVID-19 PPE to guide risk assessment, 2020.

NZNO Evidence

NZNO's position is based on both the Covid-19 Primary Care Quick Reference Guide, Aotearoa New Zealand Ministry of Health (MoH) updated 2nd September 2021 and advice from CDC on the transmission of the current Delta variant.

NZNO Recommendations

1. Primary health care staff should have access to PPE which enables them to feel safe in their workplace (Health and Safety at Work Act, 2015, section 83).
2. Primary health care staff caring for people in close interactions must be supplied with masks, eye protection, long sleeve fluid resistant gown and gloves, as per MOH advice.
3. Primary health care staff providing clinical assessment or nasopharyngeal swabbing when the patient has clinical symptoms of Covid-19, is a contact of a confirmed or positive case of Covid-19, or the patient meets MOH HIS criteria must be supplied with and wear a P2/N95 respirator which has been correctly fit tested.
4. Primary health care staff undertaking clinical assessment, nasopharyngeal swabbing, vaccination and other close interactions with patients who are asymptomatic during increased risk levels should be provided with a P2/N95 respirator which has been correctly fit tested.
5. Where there are other risk factors which cannot be managed, a P2/N95 respirator which has been correctly fit tested should also be provided. Examples of risk factors may include:
 - poor ventilation
 - high patient volumes
 - unable to physically distance
 - patients who are non-compliant with screening procedures or unsure of their contact status

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6. Primary health care staff must be fit tested and trained in seal/fit testing and correct donning and doffing of PPE.

Rationale for Position

The principal mode by which people are infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is through exposure to respiratory fluids carrying infectious virus. Exposure occurs in three principal ways:

1. Inhalation of very fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles,
2. Deposition of respiratory droplets and particles on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eye by direct splashes and sprays, and
3. Touching mucous membranes with hands that have been soiled either directly by virus-containing respiratory fluids or indirectly by touching surfaces with virus on them (CDC, 2021).

The Delta variant causes more infections and spreads faster than earlier forms of SARS-CoV-2. This means that people may be unaware that they have been exposed to the virus when accessing health services, during times of evolving community outbreaks (CDC, 2021).

Ministry of Health Recommendations

The MOH guide includes:

- Clinical criteria and HIS criteria
- Contact risk assessment
- Testing
- Infection prevention and control
- Notification and isolation advice
- Clinical care (Ministry of Health, 2021)

Personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements for close interactions, such as undertaking a nasopharyngeal swab include:

- mask*
- eye protection (prescriptive glasses are not classed as eye protection)
- gloves
- long sleeve fluid resistant gown or apron

*mask

A medical/procedure mask (with Level 2/Type IIR 120mmHg minimum) is sufficient protection in certain circumstances.

Protection with a P2/N95 respirator mask is recommended in situations of increased risk.

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Mission statement

NZNO is committed to the representation of members and the promotion of nursing and midwifery. NZNO embraces Te Tiriti o Waitangi and works to improve the health status of all peoples of Aotearoa/ New Zealand through participation in health and social policy development.

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