



The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Bulletin has been created to provide ongoing direction to healthcare providers regarding the recommended guidelines, processes and provincial supply of PPE.

## Sharing Information and Communicating about PPE

The Saskatchewan Health Authority's (SHA) top priority is always the safety of staff, physicians, patients, residents and clients. As an organization we are doing everything in our power to inform staff members and physicians on the importance of appropriate PPE and the correct way to use it.

An essential part of sharing this message is building safety into our daily work and equipping formal and informal leaders with the information they need to ensure that everyone is prepared. It is also the responsibility of each of us to stay informed and up to date on recommendations to keep ourselves and those we care for safe in the face of COVID-19.

### Safety Talk Questions

Building Safety Talk questions into huddles each day is a great way to use daily work to address PPE and supply concerns raised by staff and physicians. Suggested questions have been provided below. Feel free to open up the conversation to answer staff and physician questions or to share certain topics.

#### Safety Talk questions to discuss with your team every day:

- Does everyone understand what precautions they should be taking and when?
- Do you understand what PPE you should be wearing and in which circumstance?
- Is everyone aware of our standards for PPE donning and doffing? Any questions?
- Who feels like they could act as a buddy for those who want to review?
- How can we practice donning and doffing while ensuring we preserve PPE supplies?
- Do you know when you should be discarding your mask if you are wearing one as part of the continuous masking strategy?

### Resources Available to Share

Many resources have been created to assist with communicating about PPE and safety. The following material is all available in the [PPE section](#) of the [www.saskatchewan.ca/covid19](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/covid19) website:

- **PPE Bulletin** – Every Friday the PPE Bulletin is shared through the Daily Rounds. You can post the bulletin to your visual management walls and read through it with your team.
- **Rapid Updates** – Created to answer questions we are hearing on a regular basis, Rapid Updates provide easy to digest information about a topic such as eye protection, AGMPs and proper use of procedure masks, just to name a few.
- **Continuous and Extended Use Guidelines** – There are PPE guidelines available for acute care, continuing care, testing and assessment sites, home care, primary care and other settings. Each guideline provides detailed information about what PPE is recommended in each area of care.
- **Signage and checklists** – [Donning](#) and [doffing](#) signage and [checklist](#) are available, as well as an updated [Droplet/Contact PLUS Precautions](#) poster.
- **Safety Talks** – [Safety Talks](#) on COVID-19 related topics have been created and can be found under the [General Information for all Health Care Providers](#) section.





- **Local teams** – Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) teams are a great resource if you are unsure of the standards for PPE donning and doffing.

## N95 Respirator Reprocessing

The SHA has contingency plans in place to ensure that we are prepared in the event that N95 supplies are not available due to global demand. As a part of these contingency plans, eight Stryker Sterilizers are being installed around the province to help facilitate reprocessing of N95s in facilities.

The sterilizers received from Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) can be used not only to reprocess N95s but also for surgical instruments and other items, based on [proven evidence of sterilization](#). Installation of these machines has already begun in healthcare facilities in Regina, Moose Jaw, Yorkton, and Prince Albert and will be installed in facilities in Swift Current and North Battleford in the near future.

In addition, respirator reprocessing is well underway in Saskatoon through SHA's partnership with Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization-International Vaccine Centre (VIDO-InterVac) at the University of Saskatchewan, as a part of the SHA's contingency plan to ensure we continue to have a supply of essential PPE.

The SHA has begun to collect disposable N95 respirators in these facilities in preparation for reprocessing once the machines have been installed. Please ensure the respirators you are placing in the collection bins are not damaged. Please check the N95 for the following:

- Straps are still in good condition and firmly affixed.
- Nose pieces are not damaged or dislodged from bridge of nose and foam insert on some 3M models is still in place.
- No visible staining or gross contamination (including **makeup**).
- The N-95 has not been used in the preparation of cytotoxic drugs.

The bins will be collected on a regular basis to prepare for reprocessing. Reprocessed respirators from both processes are being sent to a NIOSH-approved lab for testing to ensure they meet all requirements. **Provided the respirators pass testing, they will be stockpiled and only used in a circumstance where new N95s or equivalent respirators are not available.**

Your collective efforts to help ensure that we are collecting as many respirators as possible are greatly appreciated.

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### 1. We are being told to conserve PPE, is that because we are running out?

No, we are not running out of PPE. Over the past number of weeks, we have been able to add to our inventory of most key items of PPE as we prepare for the busy fall/winter season ahead. The global supply of gloves remains significantly constrained and we continue to work diligently on increasing our supply. It is important to note that whether we are in the midst of a pandemic or in times of normal operations, appropriate use of PPE is important for the safety of the patients, residents and clients we serve, keeping ourselves and our fellow healthcare workers safe, and ensuring that the





resources we as citizens provide the health system are used effectively.

### 2. Why are some people wearing reusable respirators?

Those who do not fit into any of the current NIOSH approved N95 disposable respirators may be fitted for an SHA issued elastomeric reusable respirator with appropriate filtration cartridges. This final option is by exception only and will be acceptable use for those in critical roles who fail fit testing for all other models and cannot be accommodated. A staff and physician [fit testing algorithm](#) has been created to assist with this process.

### 3. Should we be wearing level one procedure masks? Are they sufficient for Droplet/Contact Plus Precautions?

An expert panel has reviewed existing research and evidence and has advised that for routine care of suspected/confirmed COVID-19 patients (or any patient with influenza-like illness) a Level 1 procedure mask provides appropriate protection. More information can be found in the [PPE Rapid Update – The Right Mask for the Right Task](#).

### 4. Can safety glasses be used for Non-Aerosol Generating Medical Procedures (AGMPs) in Droplet/Contact Plus precautions?

The SHA is moving toward a provincial standard of the highest level of eye protection, **face shields for all Droplet/Contact Plus precautions, including non-AGMP procedures**. Fully sealed goggles (that are indirectly vented or non-vented) are suitable if a face shield is not available. Please ensure that your face shield or goggles are properly fitted to your head so that your eye protection does not droop and/or interfere with the seal of your N95 respirator if performing an AGMP.

Staff can continue to wear safety glasses for routine practices and cover them with a face shield when providing care for patients/clients/residents on Droplet/Contact Plus precautions.

A [Rapid Update on Eye Protection](#) has been created to provide more clarity on which type of eye protection should be used and when.

### 5. Why can't I wear my own PPE?

At this time, staff and physicians should not be bringing in personal PPE to use while working. The SHA has sufficient supplies of PPE for all staff, physicians, patients and visitors who require masking. As per regulation 87, among others, of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, 1996, as an employer, the SHA is responsible to provide approved and properly fitting PPE to all staff and physicians and at no cost. Personal PPE is not permitted at this time for the following reasons:

- Uncertainty as to the quality, fit and appropriateness of the PPE (e.g., protection level of mask or respirator).
- Non-standard products are not familiar to OHS and IPAC staff, preventing their ability to assess safety or suitability, including the cleaning/disinfection and doffing and donning of personal PPE.
- Using personal PPE (e.g., TyVek suits, etc.) outside of recommended guidelines (built on scientific evidence) unnecessarily increases anxiety among other staff as to their own safety.