



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

This Position Statement has been developed in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and specifically addresses the use of PPE in infection prevention and control. This statement is underpinned by the ANMF's Evidence Brief – *COVID-19: Personal Protective Equipment*.¹

For the purposes of infection control PPE includes but is not limited to, the following garments and equipment:

- Gloves
- Medical masks (flat, pleated, or 'cup shaped' surgical or procedure masks)
- Goggles or face shields
- Gowns
- Respirators (N95 or FFP2 standard or equivalent)
- Fluid resistant aprons

It is the position of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. All nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) (workers) have the right to work in a safe and healthy workplace environment and this requires employers to eliminate or minimise exposure to infectious diseases, and also minimise the risks to workers arising from exposure to infectious diseases.
2. Workers have rights relating to the provision and use of PPE and these rights are supported by relevant occupational health and safety and associated legislation, including regulations and codes of practice.
3. At all times, higher order controls should be explored (such as eliminating exposure, substituting other ways of working, engineering controls etc.) in preference to relying on PPE, the lowest order control.
4. Prevention of injury, illness and disease to workers must be the first occupational health and safety priority in the selection and use of PPE.
5. Employers must manage risks arising from exposure to infectious diseases and hazardous chemicals in accordance with the hierarchy of controls. PPE is the last line of defence, it must be used in conjunction with other infection control practices both within and external to the workplace setting.

¹ ANMF Evidence Brief - *COVID-19: Personal Protective Equipment*. Available at:

http://www.anmf.org.au/documents/ANMF_Evidence_Brief_COVID-19-PPE.pdf ***ALERT* Evidence regarding COVID-19 is continually evolving. This Evidence Brief will be updated regularly to reflect new emerging evidence but may not always include the very latest evidence in real-time.**



6. PPE must be used in line with best practice evidence based recommendations in relation to COVID-19 and continue to be used in all other circumstances where clinically indicated in accordance with standard procedures and risk assessment.
7. Incorrect or overuse of PPE impacts its supply and use should be based on risk of exposure including type of activity and transmission dynamics. This should be based on best available evidence.
8. Where PPE is required for the protection of workers it is to be supplied by the employer.
9. PPE must not be reused unless it is clearly marked as reusable. Where PPE is reusable, it must be reprocessed between uses in line with the manufacturer's instructions.
10. This position statement is to be read in conjunction with the ANMF 'Occupational health and safety' policy.²
11. Employers must:
 - 11.1 provide workers with appropriate PPE to reduce their risk to infectious agents, and assist them to do their job more safely, including whenever those workers are providing care for patients who have or are suspected to have a contagious agent (such COVID-19);
 - 11.2 Ensure the PPE is suitable having regard to the nature of the work and the nature of the risk and a suitable size and fit and reasonably comfortable for the wearer;
 - 11.3 Ensure the PPE is maintained, repaired or replaced in line with the manufacturer's instructions;
 - 11.4 consult with their workers when selecting PPE and on any change of practice;
 - 11.5 provide workers with information, training and instruction in the proper use and wearing of PPE and its storage and maintenance, and the appropriate and safe removal and disposal of PPE; and that P2/N95 masks are appropriately fit tested;
 - 11.6 not require workers to undertake tasks that require PPE if the PPE is not available for use. Any such tasks are not to proceed without the required PPE;
 - 11.7 ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that the PPE is used or worn by the worker;
 - 11.8 Provide appropriate means of disposal of single-use PPE, or processing of reusable PPE, including clear instruction to workers on how to undertake this whilst reducing the risk of cross-contamination;
 - 11.9 monitor and implement relevant State and Federal Government policy about the use and supply of PPE;

² ANMF Policy – Occupational Health and Safety. Available at:
http://anmf.org.au/documents/policies/P_Occupational_health_and_safety.pdf



- 11.10 constantly review best practice clinical care with respect to PPE;
 - 11.11 provide PPE in all situations where it is clinically indicated and in accordance with usual practice. PPE should not be withheld;
 - 11.12 discourage hoarding and inappropriate reuse;
 - 11.13 protect resources from theft and inappropriate use; and
 - 11.14 take all reasonable steps to ensure ongoing supply of PPE.
12. Workers must:
- 12.1 wear prescribed PPE as lawfully and reasonably instructed;
 - 12.2 not intentionally misuse or damage the PPE;
 - 12.3 inform their employer of any damage, defect or need to clean, decontaminate or dispose of any of the PPE if they become aware of it;
 - 12.4 if they are concerned for their own or others' safety, raise their concerns immediately with their manager;
 - 12.5 take reasonable precaution for their own health and safety, including refusing to work in unsafe working conditions, such as where PPE has not been provided in line with health and safety guidelines; and
 - 12.6 observe best practice in putting on, removing and disposing of PPE.

ⁱ Endorsed by ANMF Federal Executive – 6 April 2020