



# Personal protective equipment use for non-health workers

Information on using personal protective equipment (PPE) in non-health workplaces.

**26 November 2020:** There is new guidance for the use of N95/P2 particulate respirator masks by workers in managed quarantine or isolation facilities. Workers in these facilities can get the latest updates from their management. See our [media release \(//news-media/media-releases/further-guidance-n95-masks-miq-workers\)](https://www.health.govt.nz/news-media/media-releases/further-guidance-n95-masks-miq-workers) for more information.

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## Information about PPE in non-health workplaces

In most workplaces outside of the health care setting, additional PPE for protection against COVID-19 is not required in Alert Level 2 unless it is advised in workplaces where there is a higher risk of exposure to COVID-19 through the nature of the work undertaken, such as border workers who interact regularly with people returning from overseas.

You need to wear a face mask or face covering if you are taking public transport to and from your place of work. It is important that you put on and take it off correctly. Similarly, if you choose to wear gloves, you must still practice good hand hygiene. Remember to dispose of any used single use or disposable PPE safely and appropriately. You may wish to consider wearing a face covering when you cannot maintain physical distancing of more than 2 metres from people you do not know.

It is still important that you, your co-workers and clients all stay home if unwell; adhering to basic hygiene measures including frequent hand hygiene, cough etiquette, and maintaining physical distancing where possible and practical, remain the best form of protection.

Read information on [how to use PPE safely](#) ([our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-health-care](#)).

## Where to get PPE

PPE refers to equipment such as face masks, eye protection, gowns, footwear or gloves normally worn to reduce everyday risks in your workplace, not just health care. Some workplaces already use PPE or wear a specific uniform to keep employees safe from the everyday risks of their job – this should continue. If you need to wear PPE as part of your job, contact your usual supplier or your employer.

Your employer may have decided that staff can wear a non-medical face mask for work. There may be several reasons for this change including wanting to keep you safe, your work bubble safe and to reassure customers that the business is taking all precautions to keep them safe. Remember, talk to your manager if you have any concerns or questions – it is important that you let your employer know how you are feeling about this decision and what you are concerned about.

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## Stop the spread and protect from COVID-19

Most non-health workers are not required to use PPE for protection from COVID-19. There are simple ways to stop the spread and to protect yourself and others when you are working, and outside of work.

## Stay at home if you are unwell

If you are unwell it is important you stay home from work. Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- cough
- high temperature (at least 38°C)
- shortness of breath
- sore throat
- sneezing and runny nose
- temporary loss of smell.

If you have any of these symptoms you should stay home and contact Healthline (for free) on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) (tel:08003585453), or your health care provider for advice. Read more information [about symptoms on our health advice page](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public) ([/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public)).

It's a good idea to check ahead that your client or customer is well, either by contacting them in advance before they come to your workplace, prior to them entering your workplace setting (for example, by using a poster), or before you visit their home or workplace. Reschedule their appointment if they are unwell.

## Basic hygiene measures

In addition to staying home if unwell and maintaining physical distancing where possible and practical, the following basic hygiene measures are the most important steps you can take to keep yourself and others safe.

- **Hand hygiene** – Wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds and dry them thoroughly. If unable to access soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser containing at least 60% alcohol. If using sanitiser, ensure that you use enough to cover your hands and rub hands together until dry.
- **Cough and sneeze etiquette** – Remember to cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow, or cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue, put it in a bin and clean your hands.
- **Avoiding touching your face** – This will prevent you becoming infected with virus you may have picked up by touching surfaces contaminated with infectious droplets.
- **Cleaning of surfaces and frequently touched items** – It is important to keep your work area as clean as possible including staff rooms, toilets and kitchens. Frequently clean high-touch areas with an appropriate cleaning solution to reduce transmission of germs in general. If disinfectant wipes are used these must be disposed of correctly (not flushed). If you are working

in someone else's home, make sure you clean the work area prior to leaving at the end of the day.

## Physical distancing

Physical distancing is about keeping a safe distance from others. As COVID-19 can spread from person to person through physical contact, where possible and practical in your work place, maintaining physical distancing of at least 1 metre between yourself, and co-workers is recommended. Physical distancing of more than 2 metres is recommended from people you do not know and out in public.

Physical distancing helps protect those who are more vulnerable or susceptible to illness such as our very young, very old and those with compromised immune systems.

Think of alternatives ways you can greet your co-workers and customers such as waving, smiling or other non-physical contact greetings.

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## Hand hygiene posters

These resources have been developed by the Health Quality Safety Commission (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz>).

- General hand hygiene reminder poster 1 (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/patient-safety-week/publications-and-resources/publication/3457/>) (available in multiple languages)
- General hand hygiene reminder poster 2 (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/patient-safety-week/publications-and-resources/publication/3459/>) (available in multiple languages)
- How to hand wash poster (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/infection-prevention-and-control/publications-and-resources/publication/3700/>)
- The 5 moments for hand hygiene poster (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/our-programmes/infection-prevention-and-control/publications-and-resources/publication/3698/>)

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## Hand washing and PPE videos

These videos have been produced by Auckland DHB