

Due to the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19, there is a global shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) including single use masks and single use gloves. For this reason, it is critical to ensure the use of PPE is rational and appropriate according to risk of exposure, in order to guarantee adequate supplies are available for our healthcare workforces as the highest priority.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) have developed the [Rational use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) for coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), Interim guidance](#). This includes ways to minimise the need for PPE, as well as the appropriate use of PPE according to the setting, personnel and type of activity. The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services supports the use of this WHO guidance.

This document provides guidance for non-health services on managing the rational use of PPE supplies, in accordance with the WHO advice.

Preventative measures for COVID-19 should be undertaken as a priority

Based on the available evidence, the COVID-19 virus is transmitted between people through close contact and droplets, not by airborne transmission. The people most at risk of infection are those who are in close contact with a COVID-19 patient or who care for COVID-19 patients.

Prevention and mitigation measures are key. The most effective prevention measures include:

- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, sneezing or going to the toilet
- If you cannot access hand washing facilities, using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Practicing respiratory hygiene by coughing or sneezing into your elbow or tissue and then immediately disposing of the tissue
- Maintaining a spatial distance of at least 1.5 meters from other people where possible.

Personal Protective Equipment should be used in situations where risk of transmission is high

The recommended uses of PPE by non-health services is outlined in the table below.

PPE items	Recommended uses by non-health services
Hand Soap	Hand washing with soap and water is the most effective preventative measure against community transmission of COVID-19, and should be undertaken frequently by everyone where possible.
Hand Sanitiser	If hand washing facilities are not available or accessible, the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 60 per cent alcohol is an appropriate alternative.
Single use gloves	For people who are required to have physical contact with someone with COVID-19, the use of single use gloves may be appropriate. The use of gloves <u>does not</u> replace the need for appropriate hand hygiene, which should be done frequently.
Single use face masks	For people with no respiratory symptoms and who are able to practice spatial distancing and hygiene precautions in their work, wearing a mask of any kind is <u>not</u> recommended. For people who are required to provide direct care to a person with COVID-19 or have prolonged close contact with a person with COVID-19, the use of a surgical mask is recommended. For COVID-19 purposes, P2 masks should only be used by healthcare workers undertaking aerosol generating procedures on COVID-19 patients. The use of P2 masks by non-health services for pre-existing core service delivery purposes (i.e. fire and rescue services) should continue as per operational guidelines.

PPE should be discarded in an appropriate waste container after use, and hand hygiene should be performed before putting on and after taking off PPE.