

Infection prevention and control advice in the community

27 March 2020

Basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of infections, including the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19). Basic hygiene measures include:

- hand hygiene – that is, washing hands regularly with soap and water, or cleansing with hand sanitiser¹
- staying at home if you are sick
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene
- cleaning surfaces regularly.

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as face masks can reduce the spread of infection when used correctly and in the appropriate context. This may be recommended in workplaces where people are more likely to come in contact with the disease.

General population

For **most people** in the community, PPE such as face masks are not recommended. However, for people with symptoms of an acute respiratory infection, the World Health Organization recommends that there may be benefit in wearing a face mask to reduce the spread of infection to other people.

Workplaces

1. Workplaces where people can maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential COVID-19 symptoms – facemasks and gloves are not recommended.

Examples of these workplaces include, but not limited to education facilities, pharmacies, retail outlets

2. Workers where people can maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential COVID-19 symptoms but work in an environment where they are touching surfaces or items touched by others – they may consider wearing gloves. Facemasks are not recommended. Regular hand hygiene must continue

Examples of these workplaces include, but not limited to supermarkets, services stations

3. People who, due to the nature of their job, may be unable to maintain more than 1 metre contact distance from people with potential COVID-19 symptoms – facemasks and gloves are recommended when this contact is likely to occur.

Examples of these workplaces include but not limited to police, prison staff, customs staff

¹ HHNZ recommends that ABHR solutions should meet the EN1500 testing standard for bactericidal effect. Generally, products meeting this standard have an ethanol concentration of at least 70% volume / volume (v/v) or a 60% concentration of isopropyl alcohol (<https://www.hqsc.govt.nz/assets/Infection-Prevention/Hand-Hygiene/PR/HHNZ-implementation-guidelines-June-2013.pdf>)

These recommendations are a guide only and workplace settings should consider their ability to maintain the 1 metre rule. In general, surgical/medical masks prevent the dispersal of droplets by an infected patient and the inhalation of droplets if within 1 metre of a coughing individual.

Hand hygiene and cough / sneeze etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues and wash hands) will have a bigger impact.