

JOINT STATEMENT



March 15, 2020

Re: COVID-19 Pandemic Response – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Protecting the health and safety of healthcare workers is an imperative for employers and unions. During the current situation with COVID-19, it is critical that the appropriate steps are taken to protect the health and safety of all health care workers in BC and prevent exposure to and transmission of COVID-19. Ensuring that appropriate PPE is used by all staff and physicians, while also preserving supplies of specialized equipment for when they are required to safely provide care, is critical. This joint communication issued by the Health Employers Association of BC (HEABC), on behalf of all Health Authorities/Providence Health Care (PHC) and the BC Nurses' Union (BCNU) is intended to provide clarity on the approach in BC.

The following is based on direction by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and the BC Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry.

1. Contact and droplet precautions must be used by health care workers for all interactions with clients with a suspected, presumed or confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis. Contact and droplet precautions includes gloves, face shields or goggles, gowns, and surgical masks.
2. N-95 respirators must be used by health care workers involved in aerosol-generating procedures. BCCDC has published supporting [Guidance for Respiratory Protection](#).

Nurses must use their clinical and professional judgement with respect to the need for personal protective equipment and use the most appropriate PPE for the circumstances. If staff have any questions or concerns about the type of PPE to use, or correct [donning/doffing practices](#), they must contact the Health Authorities/PHC infection control resource, occupational health and safety staff, or their supervisor to request advice. If the above-mentioned PPE and guidance are not available, the clinical judgement of the nurse will prevail until alternative solutions are made available, in alignment with the precautionary principle.

BCNU and the Health Authorities/PHC will work together to implement strategies that focus on eliminating or minimizing the risk of hazardous exposures to keep healthcare workers safe. If there is a shortage of personal protective equipment, employers and BCNU will develop contingency plans to protect the health and safety of healthcare providers.