

Wearing PPE with Religious Head Coverings

Best practice recommendations

Purpose

To outline considerations for healthcare workers wearing eye protection and/or procedure masks or N95 respirators, and maintaining/respecting religious head coverings, e.g., turban, kippah, hijab, niqāb, kapp, or head scarf. The current list is not intended to compass all religious head coverings.

1 Application

These instructions should be followed by all Alberta Health Services (AHS) staff, medical staff, volunteers, students and other persons acting on behalf of AHS.

2 Recommendations

These recommendations should be followed by all AHS staff, medical staff, midwives, volunteers, students and others acting on behalf of AHS.

2.1 Mask and eye protection

- Wear goggles, face shields and visors attached to masks according to an [infection prevention and control \(IPC\) risk assessment](#), additional precautions in place ([isolation pocket reference](#)) and the [resource manual](#) for specific diseases and conditions.
- A face shield is the preferred eye protection to wear with religious head coverings.
- Follow [donning](#) and [doffing](#) posters for detailed PPE steps, including hand hygiene.
- If you have more questions about how to wear masks and religious head coverings, contact the Workplace Health & Safety advisor in your zone.

2.2 Procedure masks and N95 respirators

- Determine which mask is appropriate for use with specific religious head coverings.
 - Procedure mask can be donned using ear loops under religious head coverings as shown in Figure 1 or
 - A mask extender or surgical mask with ties can be donned over religious head coverings as shown in Figure 2.
 - If using a mask extender, find an angle that does not pull the mask too far up or down.
 - See [Tips on the Use of Mask Extenders](#) for more details.

Figure 1



Figure 2





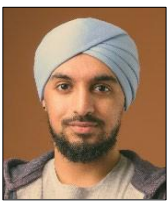


- Perform N95 respirator fit testing with head covering in place to ensure the wearer can get an effective fit/seal. The N95 must be secured over the head cover.
- When a niqāb is worn, decide if the mask or N95 respirator is sufficient face covering or if the niqāb will be worn over the mask. If a niqāb is worn over the mask or N95 respirator:
 - Have a supply of additional niqāb to change as needed.
 - When leaving a room on additional precautions:
 - Doff any additional personal protective equipment (PPE) at the designated doffing area, except for procedure/surgical mask or N95 respirator under niqāb.
 - In a convenient private change space and immediately before any other tasks:
 - Remove the niqāb
 - Doff procedure/surgical mask or N95 respirator.
- When to change a procedure mask, N95 respirator, religious head covering and face shield:
 - Procedure/surgical mask or N95 respirator is changed if wet, soiled or contaminated, e.g., Aerosol Generated Medical Procedure (AGMP) exposure, after leaving an additional precautions room, being cough or sneezed on, and before breaks and shift change.
 - Perform an [IPC risk assessment](#) and change religious head covering anytime contamination is suspected.
 - If the procedure mask, N95 respirator or face shield becomes contaminated, change as a unit with the religious head covering.

2.3 Laundering religious head coverings

- Launder regularly, e.g., daily. Refer to [IPC's Healthcare Attire \(Scrubs and Uniforms\) Information Sheet](#) for details.

3 Definitions

A head scarf is fabric which covers some or all of the hair and head and leaves the face uncovered.		
	Hijab	A head covering worn by some Muslim women.
	Kapp	A cloth head covering worn by some Christian women, such as Mennonites and Amish.
	Kippah	Also called a yarmulke or Koppel, this brimless cap is usually made of cloth and traditionally worn by Jewish men.
	Niqāb	A garment covering the lower face worn by some Muslim women as a part of an interpretation of hijab, i.e., "modest dress".
	Turban	A type of headwear based on cloth winding. Featuring many variations, it is worn by people of various cultures.

4 References

- 4.1 Abdelwahab R, Aden A, Bearden B, Sada A, Bostwick JM. Medical Scrubbing and Attire in the Operating Room and ICU: A Multicultural Guide. J Am Coll Surg. 2021;233(2):321-7. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/33991651>.
- 4.2 AORN. 2015. [Clinical Issues-October 2015 - Wood - 2015 - AORN Journal - Wiley Online Library](#)
- 4.3 Juergensmeyer M, Adetunji SA. Safety in Chemical and Biomedical Laboratories: Guidelines for the Use of Head Covers by Female Muslim Scientists. Appl Biosaf. 2022;27(1):1-6. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/36032321>.

5 Version History

IPC Document no./ID <i>(file name)</i> hi-ipc-wearing-ppe-religious-attire-z0-tips		Revision Description/Comment <i>(Brief description of issue purpose, e.g., Issued for information, Minor change / Major change with applicable details)</i>
Version	Revision date <i>(YYYY-MM-DD)</i>	
V3	2025-03-14	Major change. BPR revised to reflect updated terminology and AHS branding 2024 and IPC visual identity formatting updates.
V4	2025-05-21	Minor change. Updated link.



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