



# novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

**Date:** December 5, 2020  
**To:** Primary Care Networks and Community Physicians  
**From:** COVID-19 PCN Incident Response Task Force  
**Subject:** Continuous Use of Eye Protection and COVID-19 Exposure for Healthcare Workers

---

The need for appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE) remains critical to protecting healthcare workers and patients as Alberta continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, AHS has recently updated its continuous masking guidance to also include the continuous use of eye protection. The PCN Incident Response Task Force has updated its [guidance for community physicians](#) to align with this change.

- Eye protection should now be used continuously for all healthcare workers involved in patient care, which includes all interactions within two metres of a patient.
- This guidance applies to all clinic and PCN staff who interact with patients.
- Face shields continue to be the preferred option for eye protection.
- Continuous eye protection will supplement current PPE recommendation of [continuous masking](#).
- Eye protection and a mask can be worn continuously for multiple patients, but should be changed or disinfected when they become contaminated, wet or soiled as per IPC protocols. See recommendations for [Preservation and Reuse of Eye Protection](#).
- Eye protection includes face shields, mask/face shield combinations, goggles or safety glasses (personal prescription or facility supplied).
- Face shields and safety goggles can be ordered from AHS, as per your current PPE ordering process. AHS is just one option for community physicians to order PPE. You can source from any supplier of your choice.
  - Ordering process for [PCNs and PCN member physicians](#)
  - Ordering process for [community specialists and primary care physicians who are not a member of a PCN](#)

## **Update to Exposure Criteria for Healthcare Workers**

To ensure alignment with this enhanced PPE Guidance, and with eight months of experience, AHS has updated its approach to determining COVID-19 exposure for healthcare workers.

[Contact and droplet precautions](#) (gloves, gown, mask and eye protection) are appropriate PPE for providing care to those with COVID-19, suspect COVID-19 or Influenza-Like Illness (ILI). The use of a mask and eye protection, together with diligent hand hygiene, are most critical for preventing respiratory infections.

Healthcare workers who wore a mask and eye protection, but were not wearing gloves or a gown, at the time of their interaction with a patient who subsequently tests positive for COVID-19 (regardless of patient symptoms), will not be considered close contacts and, therefore, will not be required to quarantine.

These changes are being made to follow best practices, while protecting healthcare workers, and limiting the need to be away from work for COVID-19 related exposures to asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic patients. Please visit [ahs.ca/covidppe](https://ahs.ca/covidppe) for full information.