

Personal protective equipment (PPE): guidance for NGO community workers

This resource is for people in non-government organisations (NGOs) who support people in their homes and:

- ✓ have been advised to use personal protective equipment (PPE) by their employer
- ✓ want to know how to use it properly.

What is PPE?

PPE refers to equipment such as masks, gowns, eye protection and gloves. PPE is used to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19.

PPE is effective when it's:

1. used in the right context
2. used together with effective hygiene
3. put on properly
4. taken off and disposed of properly.



When should NGO staff visiting people in their homes use PPE?

Check your organisation's guidelines. The Ministry of Health has advice on PPE needed by health workers in different situations. Check their [website](#) as this will be reviewed regularly. Not everyone needs to wear a face mask or PPE for every interaction with people – it depends on the context.

Letting people you support know about PPE

Some people you support may feel scared or anxious when they see you wearing PPE. To help lessen these feelings, be open about what PPE is and why you are using it – to keep each other safe. Discuss this with the person you are supporting before your visit. If it's not possible to speak to the person first, you may like to leave the PPE in a clean bag in your car and greet the person you support first, from a 2-metre distance.

You can then go back to your car, sanitise your hands, and put on your PPE.



The importance of effective hygiene

PPE works best when used together with effective hygiene practices:

- ✓ if you are sick, **stay at home**
- ✓ [wash your hands thoroughly](#) and regularly, or use sanitiser (60 per cent alcohol-based) if soap is not available
- ✓ where possible, keep your distance from other people
- ✓ do not touch your nose, eyes and mouth with unwashed hands
- ✓ cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.

Putting on personal protective equipment

To be effective, personal protective equipment (PPE) needs to be put on in a specific order as shown below.

Please note you may not need to wear all of these items. Follow each relevant step. If you're unsure when and what PPE items to use, check your organisation's or Ministry of Health [guidelines](#).



1. Where

Put on your PPE before entering someone's house or in a separate room to the person.



2. Hands

Wash your hands. Sanitise them if soap is unavailable. **This is an important step.**



3. Gown

Put your arms in first. The gown must cover your clothes. Fasten the gown at the neck and tie at the back.



4. Mask

For a surgical-style mask, secure the mask around your ears. Check it fits snugly to the bridge of your nose and below the chin.



5. Goggles or face shield

Place eye protection over your face and adjust to a comfortable fit.



6. Gloves

If you are wearing a gown, make sure the gloves cover the ends of the gown's sleeves.



7. Rubbish bag and sanitiser

Ensure you bring a sealable bag and sanitiser with you for when you take off your PPE.



This video from Auckland District Health Board may also be helpful.

If you received an instruction sheet with your equipment, please follow those instructions.

When using PPE

1. Keep hands away from your face and/or mask.
2. If using gloves, change them if they tear or you think they might have become contaminated.
3. Continue using proper hand washing and cough/sneeze hygiene.

Taking off personal protective equipment

Personal protective equipment (PPE) needs to be taken off and thrown away in a specific order. Follow the relevant steps outlined below. Hand hygiene is important at each step.



1. Prepare

The outside of your PPE is potentially contaminated, so it must be taken off carefully. Ensure you have sealable plastic bags and hand sanitiser with you.



After each home visit, put all used PPE into one plastic bag and seal it well. Use a new bag for each home visit. Dispose of plastic bags according to your organisation's guidelines.



2. Where

Take off your PPE once you're outside.



3. Gloves

Take off your gloves. **Avoid touching the outside of the gloves with your hand.** Instead, roll down the first glove, then slide the finger of that hand under the second gloved hand to remove.

Place in plastic bag. Wash or sanitise hands.



4. Gown

Take off your gown. Unfasten at the neck, untie the back then pull off from your shoulders and back. **Do not touch the front.**

Place in plastic bag. Wash or sanitise hands.



5. Goggles or face shield

Take off your goggles or face shield. If these are reusable, place in a separate bag and clean according to manufacturers' guidance.

Wash or sanitise hands.



6. Mask

Take off your mask. Remove from ears. **Do not touch the front.**

Place in plastic bag. Wash or sanitise hands.

This video from Auckland District Health Board may also be helpful. For practical advice on what to do when returning home to your whānau **[click here](#)**