



March 2020

Background

Nurses often work in hazardous conditions, caring for those with illness. Nursing care does not take place at a social distance and as such nurses need to have access to the proper equipment to protect themselves from harm when working with infectious disease. At a time of global COVID-19 pandemic, this is particularly important as we work to ensure that nurses remain healthy and able to care for our country's sickest people.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is any equipment or specialized clothing that the healthcare provider uses to protect themselves from germs by creating a barrier between a virus, bacteria or fungi and the provider. PPE includes gloves, masks, gowns, goggles, face shields etc.

Nurses expect ready access in this country to proper PPE and employers and governments take the protection of its healthcare workers very seriously. At a time of global pandemic, when resources are stretched thin, and in spite of the best efforts of the system to respond in a timely and appropriate fashion, concerns about the PPE supply are increasing the strain upon nurses and all healthcare workers.

BC's nurses are ready to take action to help in the fight against COVID-19. We have seen many retired nurses reinstate their registration to help and we have heard student nurses asking what they can do. This is nursing-committed, expert, knowledgeable and compassionate. It is therefore imperative that we ensure that those who care for the public are protected.

Please note, on March 25, 2020 the BC Ministry of Health announced the requirement that all staff, medical staff and contracted staff who have **direct contact with patients, clients and residents** wear surgical/procedural masks, eye protection and gloves **when providing direct care to patients, clients and residents**. [This poster provides additional detail](#).

Key Messages

- Nurses continue to demonstrate leadership, commitment to service, and a focus on evidence-informed best practice in an effort to help combat the spread, while also caring for those directly affected by COVID-19 (and other illnesses).
- Nurses have the skills and knowledge to make clear decisions grounded in evidence with respect to understanding the risks when caring for those with illness.
- Nurses expect the highest level of protection possible from their employers when caring for those with illness.
- NNPBC applauds the commitment made by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Ministry of Health and provincial health authorities in ensuring that adequate supplies of personal protective equipment are made available to nurses and other healthcare workers.
- NNPBC supports the position articulated by our national colleagues, CNA, in this [joint statement](#) regarding the importance of nurses having ready access to personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Widespread use of masks by the public perpetuates a shortage of access for healthcare providers who rely on the necessary equipment to provide safe and effective care. Therefore, NNPBC strongly encourages nurses and members of the public to stay informed on [when and why to use a mask](#).



Further Reading/Resources

- [Joint letter from CNA and CFNU re: personal protective equipment](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [BCCNP COVID resources](#)
- [BC Government](#)
- [BC Centres for Disease Control](#)
- [BC Nurses Union](#)
- [Canadian Nurses Association \(CNA\) information on COVID](#)

Please feel free to direct questions and additional comments to info@nnpbc.com.