

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as:

- safety helmets
- gloves
- eye protection
- high-visibility clothing
- safety footwear
- respiratory protective equipment, such as face masks.

Face coverings

Face coverings are not PPE. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.

It is important to know that the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak and the effect is likely to be small, therefore face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk.

Wearing a face covering is optional and is not required by law, including in the workplace. If you or your staff choose to wear one, it is important to use face coverings properly and wash your hands before putting them on and taking them off.

Employers should support their workers in using face coverings safely if they choose to wear one. This means telling workers:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it
- Continue to wash your hands regularly
- Change and wash your face covering daily
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste
- Practise social distancing wherever possible

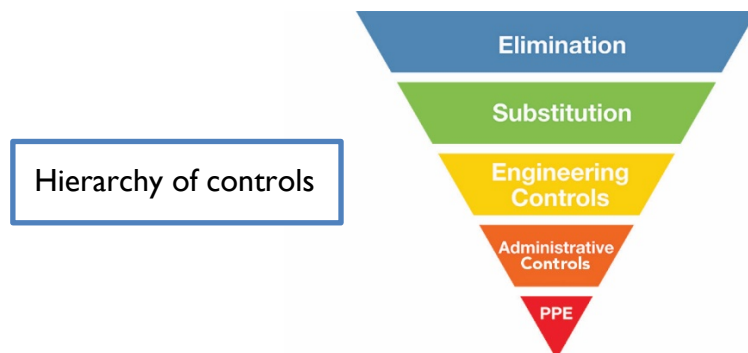
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Risk Assessment:

PPE should be regarded as a last resort. Other approaches must be considered first and include:

- Hand Hygiene – following guidance on hand washing procedures and the frequency.
- Hand sanitising stations – following guidance on suitable and effective hand sanitizers.
- Cohort working – keeping dedicated teams of people working together in certain areas.
- Maintaining 2 metre distancing or working back to back facing away from each other.
- Shift working – staggering working patterns.
- Prompt self-isolation if you experience any of the symptoms associated with Coronavirus

If a risk assessment identifies PPE as the only safe way to work, then we (your employer) must provide suitable PPE for the tasks in which you are involved, including training on its use, storage, maintenance of the equipment and continued supply.



Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so. Examples include exposure to wood dust, flour, welding fume, silica dust. If your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then you must provide this PPE free of charge to workers who need it. Any PPE provided must fit properly.

Supplies of PPE, including face masks, must continue to be reserved for those who need them to protect against risks in their workplace, such as health and care workers, and those in industrial settings like those exposed to dust hazards. If you are not able to get supplies of PPE for your usual work activities e.g. dust hazards and cannot mitigate the risk by other means you must stop activity until PPE is available.

Your risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited for COVID-19. Unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high i.e. you are in a high risk group such as clinical settings, hospitals, first responders, immigration enforcement or a small handful of other roles for which Public Health England advises use of PPE.

This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through working from home where possible, social distancing, hygiene and limiting interactions with different households e.g. by partnering and not through the use of PPE. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in the workplace and government would therefore not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management for the purpose of their health and safety assessments.

See Personal Protective Equipment Checklist if your risk assessment identifies the need to use PPE