

# UBC Employee COVID-19 PPE Guidance

## Overview

This document provides guidance about UBC's stance on employee Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including industry standard face masks/respirators, gloves, homemade and non-surgical masks and other PPE in relation to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

Visit [ubc.ca/covid19](https://www.ubc.ca/covid19) for more information about UBC's response to COVID-19, including frequently asked questions.

## Current health guidance relating to PPE

Throughout the current COVID-19 global outbreak UBC has taken direction on infection prevention from the Provincial Health Officer, the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), and continues to do so. This guidance can be expected to evolve as these agencies continually monitor accumulating scientific evidence to determine how we can best prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As this document has been developed, the current health guidance from the above agencies can be summarized as follows:

- Incorrect selection and/or use of PPE may increase your risk of exposure.
- Using non-medical or homemade protective equipment does not diminish the need for physical distancing, frequent hand washing and avoiding touching your face.
- There is no established proof that wearing non-medical or homemade protective equipment protects the person wearing it, and it may provide a false sense of security.
- Wearing a non-medical mask in public may help to limit the travel of your respiratory droplets when you cough, sneeze or talk - which may help to protect others.
- Medical /surgical masks should be used by people who are sick and health care workers.
- N95 Respirators, Medical masks and other critical PPE are in short supply and are needed by health care workers to safely care for their patients.

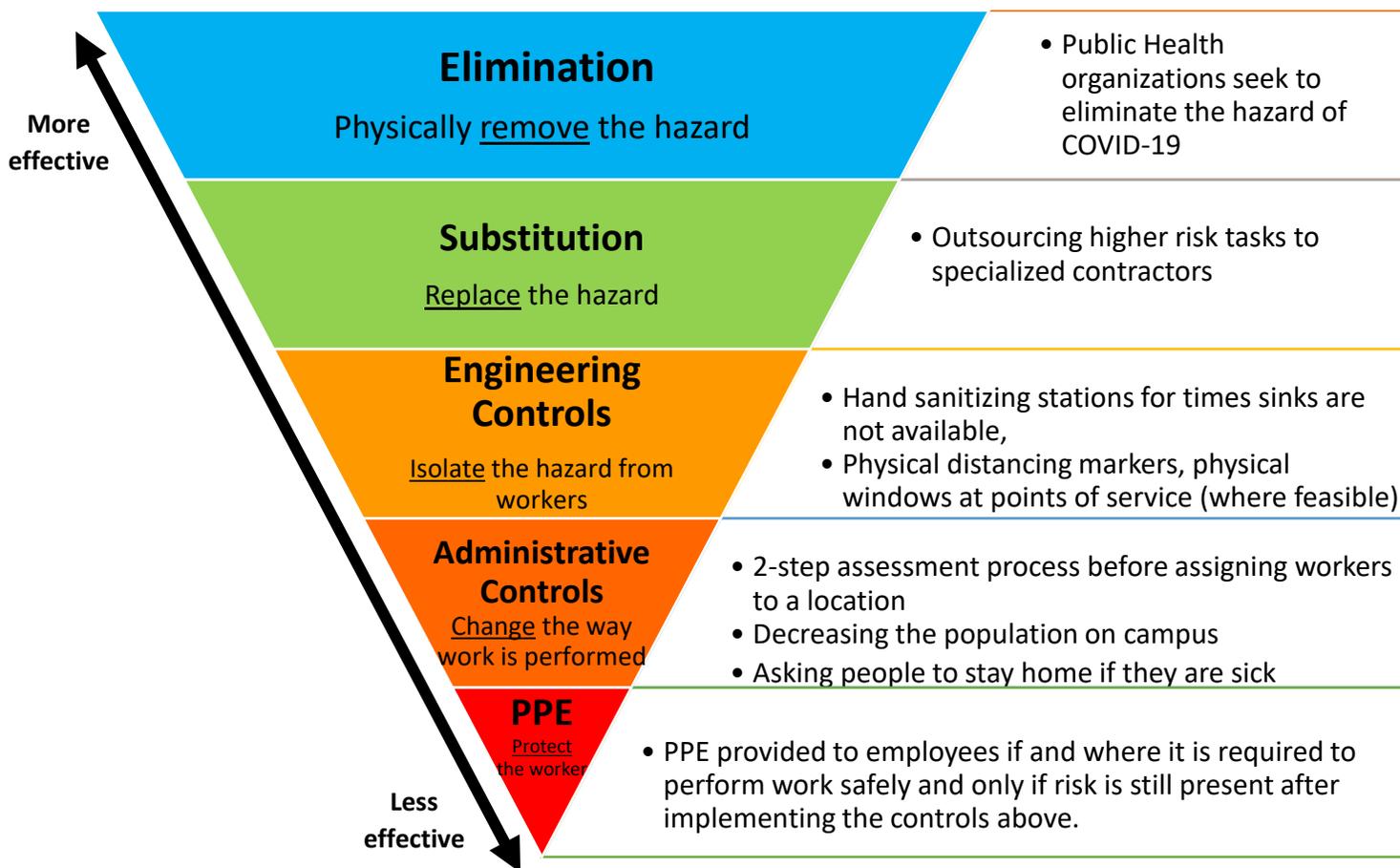
## Personal Protective Equipment in the workplace

Based on the above medical guidance and circumstances on our campuses, UBC's position on PPE is as follows:

- UBC employees carrying out tasks that require PPE, including respirators, will continue to be supplied with the appropriate equipment, as per the relevant safe working procedure.
- UBC employees carrying out tasks that do not normally require PPE will not be supplied with masks or respirators of any description.
- UBC will not provide employees with non-medical or homemade masks as these masks do not meet the performance standards for workplace PPE and do not satisfy the safety requirements of any work task.
- UBC employees may wear a non-medical mask or homemade mask at work, provided it does not interfere with them safely carrying out their duties.
- UBC asks the campus community to be respectful of students, faculty and staff who choose to wear masks.

## The role of PPE in protecting employees

PPE is used to protect employees from specific risks, however it is the least effective method of protecting employees, as outlined in the below Hierarchy of Controls diagram. The diagram also includes examples of current UBC COVID-19 risk mitigation activities.



### Respirators & Masks

Respirators are one type of PPE, and conditions of their usage for workplace safety is closely regulated by WorkSafeBC. To be effective, all respirators used must be fitted to an individual's face through a fit test. Health care workers may be directed to wear either N95 Respirators or Medical/ Surgical Masks as part of their PPE for specific tasks and under the regulations as they pertain to health care settings.

Supply shortages in N95 respirators have prompted the assessment of KN95 respirators as an alternative to address particulate respiratory hazards. However KN95 masks have been deemed inappropriate for occupational use at UBC due to the inability to properly fit test them and lack of vendor clarity around manufacturing standards. Any KN95 masks received as donations cannot be issued to UBC Employees.

### Gloves

There are many types of gloves, and the choice of glove must take into account all of the hazards that may be present, as gloves are rated for their usefulness as a barrier to different types of chemicals. Medical gloves create a barrier around the hands to reduce an individual's risk of exposure to hazardous agents. This type of PPE can be used during infectious outbreaks but must be used carefully to avoid transferring contamination between the handling of infected and clean items. Personal electronics, high touch surfaces and other shared items are prone to this 'cross contamination.'

## Eye & Face Protection

Eye protection, through safety glasses or goggles, and face shields are recommended for health care workers where there is the potential for any spraying or splattering of blood or other bodily fluids. Safety glasses can be found in various different styles and offer side protection in the form of either wraparound arms or shields. Goggles offer a higher degree of spray/splatter protection compared to safety glasses due to their ability to form a tight seal around the eyes. Face shields can protect the entire face from biological hazards. A face shield is often considered a secondary safeguard to protective eyewear. In other words, face shields are typically not used on their own. As per WorkSafeBC requirements, these types of PPE need to meet CSA Standards.

## Information about using non-medical or homemade protective equipment

Non-medical/homemade masks are not classed as Personal Protective Equipment.

UBC does not endorse the use of non-medical or homemade masks.

UBC will only supply Personal Protective Equipment that meet applicable standards and as required for UBC work.

**If you are considering using a non-medical or homemade mask, you can find information about how to do so safely on the [BC Centre of Disease Control website](#).**

## Advice on PPE at UBC

If you have any questions or require advice about PPE at UBC, or if you need to widely communicate information in this document, please contact Safety & Risk Services by emailing [ready.ubc@ubc.ca](mailto:ready.ubc@ubc.ca).