

HEALTH ALERT

Personal Protective Equipment and Basic Infection Control

Support Infection Control by:

- Frequent handwashing
- Using alcohol hand gel regularly.
- Cover your cough and sneeze

When not to use Alcohol Hand Gel?

When suspected *Clostridioides difficile* (C-Diff) infection.

What should be used instead?

Washing hands with soap and water is the only way to prevent the spread from person to person.

What is C-Diff?

C. diff, is a bacterium that can cause symptoms ranging from diarrhea to life-threatening inflammation of the colon

To assure compliance with the Standards and CDC guidelines DD Waiver Providers should:

- Have an internal Policy and Procedure
- Train all staff annually and when needed
- Be sure that ALL Staff have access to handwashing supplies and PPE and know how to obtain more if needed.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is the term used to describe the supplies that are used to decrease risk of illness and the spread of organisms that can cause illness or infection.

PPE includes gloves, gowns, masks, goggles or respirators. The proper use of PPE should always be combined with basic infection control practices which include: good hand washing techniques, the use of alcohol hand sanitizers, covering coughs and sneezes, and properly discarding soiled articles.

The use of PPE began many years ago as part of a response to the HIV epidemic in the late 1980s. At that time, Universal Precautions were defined as an awareness that any blood or bodily fluid was potentially infectious. Over the past decades, Universal Precautions evolved into Standard Precautions. These practices are incorporated into the health care system and when providing basic care. The use of PPE is also a critical component of Expanded or Transmission Precautions which are typically ordered by the physician and used for specific infections or illnesses.

Standard Precautions are a consistent approach to the care of all persons because it is not always possible to tell who might have an infection. It is a blend of Universal precautions and body substance isolation. The task being performed will determine what PPE is necessary.

PPE should always be used when providing patient or personal care including in Home and Community Based Settings. This can be done in a discreet way that is effective and protects the person's dignity.

- Use **Gloves** when touching blood, body fluids, secretions, excretions, contaminated items; for touching mucus membranes and non-intact skin.
- Use **Gowns** during procedures and patient or personal care activities when contact of your clothing/ exposed skin with blood/body fluids, secretions, or excretions is anticipated.
- Use **Mask and goggles or a face shield** during patient or personal care activities likely to generate splashes or sprays of blood, body fluids, secretions, or excretions.

Expanded Precautions are precautions that are based on how organisms are transmitted. These include Contact, Droplet and Airborne precautions and are most commonly used in hospital, rehab or skilled nursing/ long term care settings in response to specific illnesses and organisms. Some persons may return to a DD Waiver home with Contact or Droplet Precautions in place to minimize the risk of spreading an infection to someone else or to protect them from getting an infection from others.

- **Contact Precautions** - used for infections, diseases, or germs that are spread by touching the person or items in the room
 - A gown and gloves are needed for contact with patient/person or their environment of care (e.g., medical equipment, environmental surfaces) In some instances these are required for entering person's room or environment.
 - Examples: Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE), diarrheal illnesses (C-Diff), open wounds, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).
- **Droplet Precautions** - used for diseases or germs that are spread in tiny droplets caused by coughing and sneezing.
 - Surgical masks are required if the caregiver/visitor is within 3 feet of patient/person
 - Examples: pneumonia, influenza, whooping cough, bacterial meningitis
- **Airborne Infection Isolation** – This is only seen a hospital setting. Used for diseases or very small germs that are spread through the air from one person to another.
 - A Particulate respirator is required when caring for the person in a room with special, negative pressure ventilation.
 - Examples: Tuberculosis, measles, chickenpox

New Mexico DD Waiver Standards address basic infection control approaches in Chapter 10, Living Care Arrangements. Sections 10.3.9.6.2 and 10.3.10.4.2.5 state that:

1. Provider Agencies shall assure proper sanitation and infection control measures (including adequate personal protective equipment) consistent with current national standards published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This includes:
 - a. use of standard precautions;
 - b. specific isolation or cleaning measures for specific illnesses; and/or
 - c. communicable disease policies which ensure that employees, subcontractors, and agency volunteers are not permitted to work with signs/symptoms of communicable disease or infected skin lesions until authorized to do so in writing by a qualified health professional.

Helpful resources for Providers.

- Using PPE: Poster for donning and removing PPE
<https://nmhealth.org/publication/view/marketing/4481/>
<https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/PPE-Sequence.pdf>
- Handwashing poster
<https://nmhealth.org/publication/view/marketing/4480/>
- How to Hand Rub poster (Using alcohol hand gel)
https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandRub_Poster.pdf?ua=1

- Free nursing CE available on Medscape (Must set up a free account)
 - Infection Prevention: A Hierarchy of Controls Approach https://www.medscape.org/viewarticle/880302_slide
 - Infection Transmission Risks Associated with Nonsterile Glove Use https://www.medscape.org/viewarticle/880896_3