

# Guidance for Optimizing the Supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for EMS Clinicians

## N95 Masks: Extended Use and Limited Reuse



Maine EMS recommends that EMS clinicians not wear masks any longer than a single shift and for no more than five (5) patient contacts. Extended use is favored over reuse because it is expected to involve less touching of the respirator and therefore less risk of contact transmission. A key consideration for safe extended use is that the respirator must maintain its fit and function. *At any time, if the masks are exposed to aerosol generating procedures; blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients; or patients who are co-infected with another infectious disease requiring contact precautions (i.e. Clostridium difficile) the mask should be discarded.* Clinicians should store the masks separately in between uses in a dry, clean, breathable container (i.e. paper bag). Use a clean pair of gloves to don previously used masks and then dispose of those gloves and don new gloves before making patient contact.

Source: U.S. CDC & National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (March 28, 2018) (<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/hcwcontrols/recommendedguidanceextuse.html#respeextended>)

## Isolation Gowns: Contingency Capacity Strategies

Maine EMS encourages EMS services facing gown shortages to work collaboratively with their local healthcare facilities to potentially begin using reusable (i.e. washable) gowns that can be safely laundered and reused. They could also consider the use of coveralls; however, clinicians must be trained and practiced in their use prior to delivering care. U.S. CDC indicates that most gowns do not have expiration dates; however, gowns past their manufacturer-designated shelf life are likely still usable as long as the clinician performs an integrity check prior to use.



Source: U.S. CDC (March 17, 2020) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/isolation-gowns.html>)

## Eye Protection: Contingency Capacity Strategies

Maine EMS recommends that EMS services shift from disposable to re-usable devices where available; however, if not possible then agencies should begin considering strategies to extend the use of eye protection. Eye protection should be assigned to a single clinician if being reused. It should be removed, cleaned, and disinfected after each use. Any eye protection that is damaged should be discarded and no longer used. Eye protection can be cleaned and disinfected by following the published U.S. CDC guidance which includes: wiping the inside, followed by the outside of the eye protection with a clean cloth saturated in a neutral detergent solution or cleaner wipe; wiping the outside of the eye protection with a wipe or clean cloth saturated with EPA-registered disinfectant; wiping the outside with clean water to remove residue; and allowing them to fully dry before reuse.



Source: U.S. CDC (March 17, 2020) (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/eye-protection.html>)

For More Information:



Note: Interim guidance and is subject to change. Information current as of March 26, 2020

