

Message re: PPE from KPCO-EOC-NEWS
AUDIENCE: All KPCO Staff

Subject: **COVID-19 PPE Update for KPCO – March 25, 2020**

This email is being sent to all KPCO.

***Information will be updated regularly as it evolves**

Your concerns about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are being heard. We are committed to ensuring the safety of our patients, physicians and staff.

We understand that many concerns have surfaced regarding the need for certain personal protective equipment (PPE) when caring for patients. As the COVID-19 public health crisis evolves, KPCO continues to be committed to ensuring the safety of our patients and staff.

As part of that commitment and responsibility, **we are using the appropriate droplet protections for routine care consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and World Health Organization (WHO).**

Recommended Isolation Precautions

We are operating under the assumption that there is community spread of COVID-19 in Colorado. Therefore, exposure history is less relevant, and we consider anyone who has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 to be a suspected case. **It is our obligation to use PPE in accordance with exposure risk.**

When patients have symptoms consistent with COVID-19:

- Contact and droplet isolation are recommended
- PPE for **contact precautions** include the use of gowns and gloves.
- PPE for **droplet precautions** include the use of procedure masks and eye protection.

For patient care procedures that are known to generate airborne particles:

- Airborne protections (N95 respirator masks or powered air purifying respirators (PAPRs)) are recommended.
- Aerosol-generating procedures that may be encountered include:
 - Administration of aerosolized or nebulized medication (See document in toolkit: [When to Use Airborne Precautions in Medical Offices](#))
 - Sputum induction
 - Bronchoscopy and bronchoalveolar lavage
 - Airway suctioning
 - Laryngoscopy
 - Nasopharyngeal washing, aspirate and scoping
 - Sputum induction
 - EGD

- Procedures with entry into mouth and nose
- Pulmonary function testing
- Endotracheal intubation
- Tracheostomy care/airway suctioning
- BIPAP
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation

When possible, alternatives to minimize aerosolization should be used or these procedures should be deferred. In order to allow you to take every possible precaution, we support the use of N95 masks for persons performing these procedures on any patient and anyone else who is required to be in the same space during the procedure. **Please remember: if you are performing the above procedures on a patient known or suspected to have COVID-19, airborne precautions are advised. This includes the use of N95 masks and negative pressure rooms with associated delays in room turnover.** (Please also reference this section: Working in Contracted Facilities, in this document).

For nasopharyngeal swab specimen collection:

- Consistent with the WHO and the KP Northern California COVID Droplet Mitigation Playbook, KPCO policy is that N95 respirators are not required for nasopharyngeal swab specimen collection.
- We acknowledge that the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) has taken a different approach. KP National supports the use of procedure masks (droplet isolation) during the collection of nasopharyngeal swabs.

Isolation	PPE Required	Purpose	Example	COVID-19 Scenario
Standard	Hand hygiene	Routine care	Any patient interaction	Sitting at computer station while patients are being triaged
Contact	Gown, gloves	Skin barrier to droplet particles and fluids	C. difficile, MRSA	Interview and examination of a patient who is coughing in an exam room with the door closed
Droplet	Procedure mask, eye protection	Mucous membrane barrier to droplet particles and fluids	Influenza, pertussis	
Airborne	N95, PAPR Negative pressure room	Respiratory barrier to airborne particles	Tuberculosis, measles	Giving an aerosolized nebulizer to a patient suspected to have COVID-19

Working in Contracted Facilities

- We understand that it may be confusing when external facilities (e.g., partner hospitals, SNFs) follow different infection control practices.
- **Providers working at our contracted facilities should follow the infection prevention guidance issued from those facilities.**
- If you are concerned that you are not being provided with PPE in concordance with a facility's recommended guidelines, please escalate this to the chief of your department.

Using approved PPE in the appropriate setting sends the right message to patients

- When our patients see our health care workers wearing PPE in situations where it is not required, such as in the hallway or anywhere outside of an isolation room, patients may become unnecessarily afraid.
- Kaiser Permanente is a trusted source of accurate health information and we want our actions to support this trust. The actions we take must be consistent with scientific information, so that our patients feel confident doing the same.

Resource Stewardship

Considering the national PPE shortage, we need to be good stewards of our resources. **We want to reinforce to you that KPCO's recommendations are based on medical risk rather than PPE supply concerns.**

There may be circumstances where we will recommend the use of PAPRs instead of procedure masks, as PAPRs are able to be cleaned and reused. This is an example where a higher level of protection is used to conserve resources despite exceeding the PPE need based on exposure risk.

Please follow these guidelines for PPE use:

- All masks (including N95 respirators and any other surgical or procedural masks), gowns, gloves and eye protection are to be used for clinical needs ONLY.
- Do not take and/or use any masks or N95 respirators for personal use.
- N95 respirators and procedure masks should never be given to members for their personal use.
- Patients who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 (fever, cough or shortness of breath) and coughing patients should be provided with procedure masks. If a symptomatic patient is wearing a procedure mask, this does not constitute an exposure to the provider.
- Wearing a procedure mask throughout the workday, when not in contact with a symptomatic patient, is not a validated practice.
- Asymptomatic patients do not need to wear a procedure mask. Droplets are spread by coughing, sneezing and direct contact with secretions.
- If a patient is unable to wear a mask or if the patient's mask must be removed for an examination or test, the provider may don PPE. For example, pediatric patients may not be able to reliably wear a procedure mask during a visit.

By only using the appropriate PPE when medically indicated, you will help to ensure these supplies remain available over the course of this pandemic. Our national and regional supply chain experts continue to secure additional supplies through traditional as well as innovative means, and we are carefully managing supply access in each of our facilities. We appreciate all your thoughts on how equipment can be better used. We are listening to your suggestions and take these ideas seriously. Please do not create your own processes for the use of PPE.

Special Consideration for High Risk Employees

In addition to the steps above to protect our providers and staff, we have also developed a process by which health care workers with documented, high risk medical conditions can be evaluated for special consideration to temporarily discontinue patient facing care. If you believe that your personal medical conditions put you at high risk, you may apply through CPMG or HP HR to request that your work position be modified. (Please see: [Whom to call diagram](#))

Home Crafted Masks

We appreciate those who want to donate supplies and equipment, and we understand that some of you may want to bring PPE from home. **Our top priority is the health and safety of patients and staff. Therefore, when you are in a patient care situation where PPE is needed according to exposure risk, you should use the supplies and equipment that Kaiser Permanente provides to you or that you are provided from a hospital where you are working.** This is aligned with public health authority guidance. This equipment has been approved to be medically safe and appropriate to protect against COVID-19.

That said, we understand that wearing a mask provides some people with a sense of security and personal comfort during this time of high uncertainty. If you feel more comfortable doing so, you may choose to wear a home crafted mask. **Please remember: if you are in close contact with a person known or suspected to have COVID-19, procedure masks are recommended.** Patients will be offered home crafted masks, as well, at entry to medical offices. If you are crafting masks, please consider that these materials are representing our KP brand. Send an email to KPCO-EOC@kp.org to coordinate the donation of home crafted masks to KPCO for use by employees and members in our medical offices.

If you have a lead by which to obtain PPE supplies through an external source, please inform the EOC by emailing KPCO-EOC@kp.org. We ask that you not purchase this equipment on your own.

Extended Use and Reuse of PPE

In the case that this should be necessary, we are exploring what may be feasible for extended use and reuse of PPE. Only those practices that have been reviewed and approved by the EOC will be permitted ([N95 Mask Reuse](#)). It is critical that any proposed means of extending use of PPE be guaranteed to retain the protective qualities of the equipment. Our internal experts are

qualified to certify that any measures taken do not interfere with the integrity of the PPE. Reuse guidance is posted on the COVID-19 Toolkit.

The measures outlined above, along with the many steps we are taking to slow the spread of this virus, will significantly increase our ability to safely care for the larger number of COVID-19 patients expected in the days to weeks ahead. Chief among our priorities is the protection of our health care workers who are providing care to our members with such expertise and compassion.

Thank you for the incredible work you do every day under these extraordinary circumstances.