The Basics of Eye Protection for COVID-19

In areas with moderate to substantial community transmission of COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that healthcare personnel wear eye protection to help prevent the spread of infection. Eye protection must be worn in addition to a mask or respirator.

Why wear eye protection during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Eye protection, such as face shields and goggles, protect your eyes from splashes, sprays, and infectious droplets. Your eyes are a potential portal of entry for COVID-19.
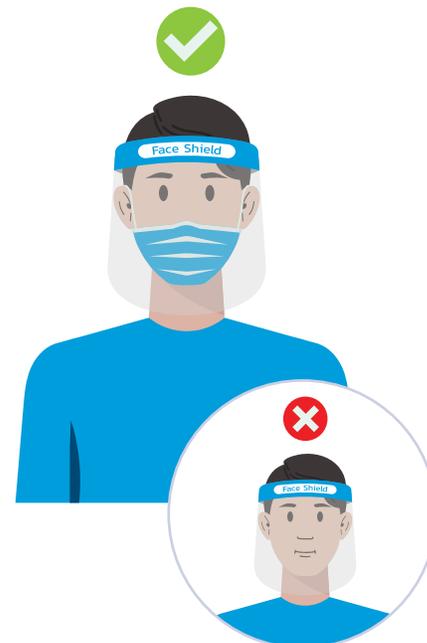
What counts as eye protection (and what does not)?

Eyewear must protect the eyes from all sides so fluids do not enter. Most face shields and goggles count as eye protection.

Regular eyeglasses do not offer adequate eye protection because they leave gaps around the face and will not protect eyes from all splashes and sprays. Contact lenses are not considered eye protection.

COMPLIANT

NON-COMPLIANT

Who should wear eye protection?

When eye protection protocols for COVID-19 are in place, staff who are patient facing or come within 6 feet of a patient should wear eye protection, regardless of whether the patient has COVID-19.

Where should I wear eye protection?

Depending on your facility's policy, eye protection should be worn anywhere you may come within 6 feet of a patient, including intake areas, patient rooms, and procedure rooms. This may even pertain to visitor areas.

Eye protection should always be worn when splashes or sprays are anticipated, regardless of COVID-19 risk.
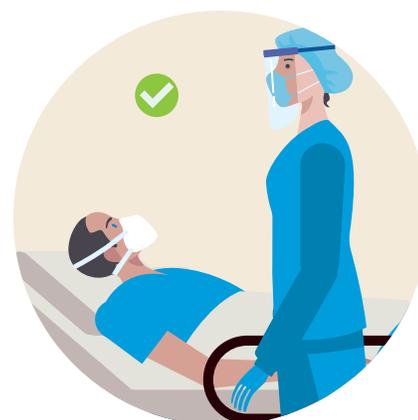
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How do I safely remove my eye protection?

- Do not touch your eye protection during wear. If you need to remove your goggles or face shield, leave the patient care area.

- The front of your eye protection is considered contaminated. To remove face shields that wrap around the head, grasp from the back and remove carefully.

- To remove goggles that sit above the ears, take them off as you would a pair of eyeglasses, using the side pieces and being careful not to touch the front.

- Perform hand hygiene after touching or removing your eye protection.
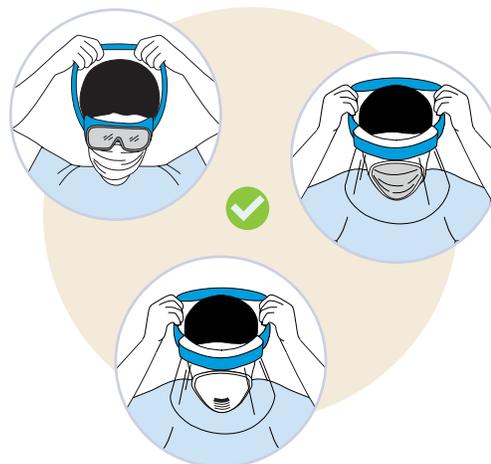
Depending on your facility's supply of eye protection, you may be instructed on cleaning, extended use, or reuse of this equipment. Cleaning with dish soap or certain wipes may help to prevent fogging.

Clean and disinfect

Clean and disinfect eye protection when soiled or after use. Follow the manufacturer's or your facility's protocol for use of a disinfecting solution or hot soapy water. Perform hand hygiene afterward. Fully dry (air dry or use clean absorbent towels). In general, sterilization is not necessary.

Extended use

Eye protection can be worn for repeated encounters with different patients if it is not removed between patients. Check your facility's policy on extended use of eye protection.

Reuse

To reuse eye protection after it has been removed, clean and disinfect as instructed by your facility and store in a manner that prevents contamination.

SOURCES

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