

Q. What is universal eye protection?

A. Any healthcare personnel with direct contact with patients (including non-COVID-19 patients) must wear eye protection, which includes goggles or a face shield. Direct contact can be defined as coming within approximately 6 feet of a patient. Due to our current PPE supplies on hand, face shields are the preferred means of eye protection.

Q. Why are we recommending universal eye protection now?

A. In early July 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended use of universal eye protection for all patient care encounters in areas with moderate to substantial community transmission of COVID-19. The virus is still occurring in southeast Michigan, so we are adding additional protective measures to keep our staff safe. Universal eye protection reduces the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in addition to a facemask ensures the eyes, nose, and mouth are all protected from exposure to respiratory secretions, and addresses the risk of asymptomatic spread.

Q. What evidence supports universal eye protection?

A. Transmission of COVID-19 occur when droplets from an infected person come into contact with mucus membranes. Masks are recommended for protecting the airway and eye protection is recommended as infectious droplets could come into contact with the eye and spread down the tear duct into the respiratory tract. Use of eye protection and universal masking prevents this transmission from occurring. We expect this guidance to evolve as we learn more about COVID-19.

Q. Can I bring my own eye protection?

A. Yes, however, it should be either goggles or face shields. According to CDC, protective eyewear (e.g., safety glasses, trauma glasses) with gaps between glasses and the face likely do not protect eyes from all splashes and sprays.

Q. I register patients/clean patient rooms/deliver food trays. Do I have to wear eye protection?

A. Yes, anyone with direct patient contact should wear eye protection.

Q. If I already wear eyeglasses or contact lenses for my vision, do I need to wear eye protection?

A. Yes. According to CDC, eyewear with gaps between glasses and the face likely do not protect eyes from all splashes and sprays. Contact lenses are also not considered adequate eye protection.

Q. I don't perform patient care, but I do enter patient rooms for my job. Do I need to wear eye protection?

A. If a patient is in the room, yes, eye protection should be worn.

Q. Do I have to wear eye protection everywhere in my unit? Like when I'm at a workstation?

A. You need to wear eye protection when you anticipate coming into contact with a patient.

Q. What is the proper way to remove eye protection?

A. Consider the front of the eye protection to be contaminated. For face shields that wrap around the head, grasp from the back and remove carefully. For goggles that sit above the ears, remove them as you would remove a pair of eyeglasses, being careful not to touch the front of the eyewear. Perform hand hygiene after removing or handling.

Q. What is the proper way to clean the goggles or face shields?

A. Use an approved hospital disinfectant (e.g., PDI Sanicloth) to clean them. Be sure to check the label on the disinfectant and follow instructions if there is a recommended amount of time necessary for proper disinfection.

Q. Can I wear my eye protection between patients?

A. Yes, you can practice extended use with your eye protection. This means wearing it throughout the day, even as you see different patients. When you are extended using any PPE, handle it as little as possible and perform hand hygiene before and after adjusting. Be sure to remove and clean your eye protection if it becomes visibly soiled or contaminated.

Q. Can I reuse my eye protection?

A. Yes, you may reuse it. Disinfection between uses is recommended, and hand hygiene should be performed.

Q. If my work brings me to the hospital, must I wear eye protection?

A. You need to wear eye protection if you expect to have direct contact with patients and/or will enter a patient's room or a procedure room.

Q. Do I need to wear eye protection in ambulatory settings, too?

A. Yes, at this time we are recommending universal eye protection for our acute care campuses, ambulatory facilities, or any other Beaumont facility where direct patient care may occur.

Q. I have a plexiglass barrier at my desk/workstation. Do I need to wear eye protection if patients approach me?

A. No, if there is a physical barrier separating you from patient contact, such as a plexiglass barrier, then eye protection is not required.

References:

CDC. Coronavirus Disease. Infection Control Guidance. Available: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-recommendations.html> Accessed July 22, 2020.

Adapted from:

University of Nebraska Medical Center. Nebraska Medicine adapts universal PPE policy. Available: <https://www.unmc.edu/news.cfm?match=25735> Accessed July 22, 2020.