COVID-19: Protective Eyewear Guidance

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The use of eye protection and other personal protective equipment (PPE) has been established for certain employee groups in specific work settings. These employees are to follow departmental requirements when selecting eye protection. CSA-approved eye protection must be used if it has been previously designated based on the hazards in the work area. Reusable eye protection must be cleaned and disinfected between uses in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Guidance is provided as follows on considerations when selecting eye protection and on cleaning and disinfecting reusable eyewear in accordance with public health resources including Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health [1] and Public Health Ontario [2].

Eye Protection

Goggles

Goggles provide the most reliable protection for the eyes against splashes, sprays, and respiratory droplets. The lens is typically made of plastic, commonly polycarbonate, with an adjustable elastic strap to allow snug fit around the eyes. Goggles are typically reusable.

Considerations for wearing goggles

- Goggles should fit snugly over and around the eyes or prescription eyeglasses.
- Goggles with anti-fog coating are preferred to help maintain clarity of vision.
- Indirectly-vented or non-vented goggles provide better protection against splashes and sprays than directly-vented goggles.
- The wearer should ensure that the goggles and the mask are compatible with each other so that there is no interference with the proper positioning of the goggles or with the fit or seal of the mask.
- Goggles should be worn after putting on a mask and taken off before removing a mask.
- Goggles must be cleaned and disinfected between uses in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Face Shields

A face shield is personal protective equipment that has a transparent window or visor supported in front of the face, serving as a barrier to protect the wearer's eyes and face. Face shields are preferred as eye protection as they cover the maximum area of the face. Face shields do not replace masks but can be worn in addition to a mask to provide eye protection.

Considerations for wearing a face shield

- Safety goggles may be used in place of a face shield where eye protection is required.
- Face shields must cover the forehead, extend below the chin and cover the sides of the face
- A face shield that is not CSA-approved must not be used if the job task requires Canadian Standards Association (CSA)-approved safety glasses or goggles.
- The material used for the visor (i.e., part of the face shield that covers the face) needs to be impenetrable by splashes, sprays, and spatter of body fluids.
- Wearing the face shield must not create a health hazard (e.g., skin irritation, allergic reaction, etc.) or a safety hazard (e.g., poor visibility, sharp edges, etc.) of its own.
- The face shield must be adequately replaced, cleaned, and/or disinfected.

- Reusable face shields must be cleaned and disinfected between uses in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Safety Glasses

Safety glasses are not considered to provide the same level of protection from splashes, sprays and droplets as face shields or goggles. They are typically made of a polycarbonate material and may wrap around with solid side shields, with venting at the temples to reduce fogging. Safety glasses are typically reusable.

Considerations for wearing safety glasses

- If using safety glasses, select those that wrap around your eyes and fit snuggly with no gaps.
- Safety glasses may not be substituted where face shields or goggles are required (e.g., when using Droplet and Contact personal protective equipment).
- Use CSA-approved safety glasses if required and if it has been previously designated for the task based on the hazards present.
- Safety glasses must be replaced, cleaned, and/or disinfected as required.
- Safety glasses must be cleaned and disinfected between uses in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.

Cleaning and Disinfection Instructions for Eye Protection

How to clean and disinfect eye protection (e.g., goggles, safety glasses and face shields)

1. Perform hand hygiene before removing eye protection.
2. Remove eye protection avoiding touching the front, potentially contaminated areas and place on a non-porous, cleanable surface.
3. Perform hand hygiene and put on a pair of disposable gloves (e.g., vinyl or nitrile).
4. Using a disinfectant wipe, carefully wipe the inside surface of the eye protection. Discard wipe.
5. Take another disinfectant wipe and wipe the outside surfaces of the eye protection. Discard wipe.
6. Take another disinfectant wipe to clean the surface where the eye protection was place during cleaning. Discard wipe.
7. Ensure all surfaces remain wet with disinfectant for at least 1 minute (or applicable disinfectant wipe contact time).
8. If visibility is compromised by residual disinfectant, rinse the eye protection with tap water & remove excess water.
9. Allow to dry.
10. Remove gloves and perform hand hygiene by washing hands [3] with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer [4] with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
11. Store the eye protection in a clean and designated area.

Disposable face shields with visor and foam for forehead comfort are designed to be discarded after single use. However, the user may decide to re-use the disposable face shield after cleaning and disinfection under the following conditions:

1. If the face shield is used by the SAME user;
2. The foam piece is not visibly soiled; and,
3. The face shield does not appear to be damaged (e.g., cracked) or compromised (e.g., poor visibility)

Eye protection is available through the Physical Resources Stockroom [5].

Resources

Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. 2021-04-19. Guidance for Protective Eyewear [1]

Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control. 2021-12-21. Use and Reuse of Eye Protection during the COVID-19 Pandemic [6]

Public Health Ontario 2020-07-16. Focus On: Face Shields as Source Control [7]

Health Canada COVID-19 Medical Masks and Respirators: Information for Health Professionals [8]

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Links
[1] https://wdgpublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/guidance_for_protective_eyewear_2021.04.20_0.pdf [2] https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/ipac/2021/03/covid-19-infographic-cleaning-eye-protection.pdf?la=en [3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9hjmqes72I [4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDUJ4CAYhpA [5] https://www.pr.uoguelph.ca/signage-and-hygiene-supplies-covid-19 [6] https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/hi-ipc-covid-ppe-eye-protecton-z0-emerging-issues.pdf [7] https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/main/2020/07/covid-19-face-shields-source-control.pdf?la=en [8] https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/covid19-industry/medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment/medical-masks-respirators/health-professionals.html#a2