



Department of Health

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DATE: November 24, 2020
TO: All Healthcare Settings, including but not limited to Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Adult Care Facilities (ACFs), End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Facilities, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Home Care, Outpatient Clinics, and Private Practices
FROM: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

Health Advisory: Universal Use of Eye Protection

Please distribute immediately to:

Administrators, Infection Preventionists, Hospital Epidemiologists, Medical Directors, Nursing Directors, Risk Managers, and Public Affairs.

NYSDOH strongly recommends universal use of eye protection by healthcare personnel for all patient interactions, in addition to face masks, throughout New York State. Wearing both face masks and eye protection provides better protection for healthcare personnel who might unknowingly encounter asymptomatic, pre-symptomatic, or symptomatic but undiagnosed patients or residents with COVID-19. The use of eye protection, in addition to face masks, might prevent some exposures that would otherwise require healthcare worker furlough (i.e. when a healthcare worker is in contact with a person with COVID-19 who was not wearing a face mask, see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-risk-assesment-hcp.html>). Face shields or goggles should be used. Standard eyeglasses are not personal protective equipment (PPE) and do not constitute sufficient eye protection.

NYSDOH recognizes that PPE supply shortages might prevent universal use of eye protection in all healthcare encounters. In this situation, the shortage should be documented, and eye protection should be reserved for and considered required for the care of patients and residents with: known COVID-19; symptoms consistent with COVID-19; known exposure to a person with COVID-19; or in settings with a higher prevalence of patients or residents with COVID-19. Such settings include, but are not limited to, emergency departments, outpatient clinics and practices which routinely see patients with acute infectious diseases, and nursing homes which have recently had residents or staff positive for COVID-19. Healthcare facilities and practices are referred to NYSDOH and CDC guidance on extended use and cleaning and disinfection of eye protection as a contingency strategy for PPE conservation.

Further information is available at:

- https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/04/doh_covid19-ppeshortages_040220.pdf; and
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/eye-protection.html>.

General questions or comments about this advisory can be sent to icp@health.ny.gov.