



Clinical Safety Alert

Clinical Advice Line: 0428 238 423 (0428 ADVICE)



CSA 98/21

17-08-2021

Author branch:

Clinical Governance

Distributed to:

All Staff

Actions required by:

Associate Director Clinical Operations

Zone Managers

Duty Operations Managers

Station Officers

Paramedics

Clinical Volunteers

Paramedic Educators

Clinical Training Officers

Aeromedical Operations

Notes:

Nil

Clinicians are required to log into www.myshift.com.au to confirm their understanding of the contents of this Clinical Safety Alert. (PRO2017-027)

**NOTE: Clinician refers to any healthcare worker providing care to patients including paramedics, clinical volunteers, nurses and doctors.*

COVID-19 – CLINICIAN SAFETY UPDATE 17 AUG 21

NSW Ambulance, along with all of NSW Health, takes PPE guidance from the [COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Manual](#) which is produced and regularly reviewed by the Clinical Excellence Commission. The CEC manual provides guidance that is based on the COVID-19 incidence in NSW and the recommendations vary depending on the burden of infection on the health system.

The purpose of the manual is to provide clarity on the requirements for the management of patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19, the use of PPE, and transmission prevention strategies.

The following are some specific topics which are particularly relevant to NSW Ambulance clinicians and have been the subject of some enquires made to Clinical Systems:

PPE REQUIRED - For **RED** level risk, the following PPE standards that are above the current IPAC manual and required in the NSW Ambulance practice setting:

- Contact droplet and airborne precautions with P2/N95 mask must be used for all patient contacts. Remember to complete a fit check every time a mask is applied and use the mask assigned during fit testing (if applicable).
- Where 1.5m physical distancing cannot be applied (between you and the patient or relative), patients and relatives should be asked to don a **surgical mask**.
- Wear a surgical mask while within a health facility including Emergency Departments, ambulance stations, aeromedical bases and control centres.
- Maintain physical distancing with all staff if possible within non patient areas such as an ambulance station.

PPE NOT REQUIRED - when in contact with a patient with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 the IPAC Manual does not recommend the following:

- Use of boots or shoe covers is not recommended as part of COVID-19 PPE. These are only required in the operating theatre or a trauma room.
- A head covering is not required. Head coverings are part of operating theatre attire and/or to be used when performing a sterile/aseptic procedure (e.g. central line insertion) to prevent contact between a Health Workers (HW) hair and patient/equipment. Hair nets do not provide protection from exposure to droplet virus (COVID, or other types of virus).

FACIAL HAIR - At all times when a HW is required to use a respirator; the HW must not have any facial hair present. This includes at the time of [fit testing](#). The current experience is that when NSW Ambulance clinicians come into contact with a COVID positive patient, Public Health assessment will consider the presence of any facial hair a breach to PPE and classify the contact as close.

PLASTIC/LINEN COVERS – The use of plastic covers or sheets over equipment in the rear of ambulances vehicles when transporting patients meeting elevated risk criteria is not supported or endorsed. The infection control team have advised these mechanisms do not remove the requirement to complete Ambulance cleaning as per [Skill 114.5.7](#).

This is a challenging time for all health workers and we thank and encourage all clinicians to adopt the recommended PPE guidance. Please contact your supervisor, Clinical Training Officer or Clinical Systems (Ambulance-Clinical-Systems@health.nsw.gov.au) if you need any advice on PPE.

Clare Beech ASM

Executive Director Clinical Systems