Use of disposable gloves healthcare workers

This fact sheet describes the appropriate use of single use, non-sterile disposable gloves when providing care during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Single use, disposable gloves should be worn as part of other PPE when exposure to blood and body fluids is expected.

- Only wear gloves when you absolutely need to.
- You cannot absorb COVID-19 through your skin; therefore gloves do not add protection against COVID-19 in the absence of infectious material.
- Regular hand hygiene using a hand sanitiser is a much better way to keep safe along with social distancing and wearing a mask.

When to use disposable gloves:

- direct contact with blood
- direct contact with body fluids (secretions and excretions)
- direct contact with items or surfaces that are visibly contaminated with blood or body fluids
- procedures that involve a risk of direct contact with blood or body fluids, e.g. accessing a vascular device, drawing blood, emptying a commode or urine bag
- direct contact with mucous membranes or non-intact skin
- when using cleaning chemicals

When disposable gloves are not required:

- taking blood pressure, temperature and pulse
- bathing and dressing the patient
- mobilising patient
- feeding patient
- giving a subcutaneous or intramuscular injection

Dos and don’ts of glove use
Why wearing gloves continually can be harmful

- Wearing gloves continually means you have “clean hands in a dirty glove” which can increase the risk of cross transmission
- Opportunities for hand hygiene are missed when providing care using gloves
- You are more likely to touch your nose, mouth or eyes and infect yourself
- You are more likely to get skin irritation or dermatitis on your hands

Facts about glove use and COVID-19

- You cannot absorb COVID-19 through your skin
- Gloves can act as a vehicle for the transmission of micro-organisms so must be removed and hand hygiene performed as soon as task is completed
- Gloves do not provide complete protection against hand contamination due to microscopic defects in the glove material. Therefore, hand hygiene is required after removal.
- Any cuts or abrasions present on hands should be covered with a waterproof dressing prior to donning gloves.
- Gloves need to be removed when contact with blood or another body fluid, has ended and hand hygiene performed.
- If gloves are damaged, then they should be removed immediately, and hand hygiene performed before replacing gloves.
- **The same pair of gloves must not be worn continuously for multiple tasks.** This contaminates the environment and also poses a risk to you if you touch your face whilst wearing them.
- When wearing gloves do not wash or use alcohol-based hand rub on them

Types of non-sterile gloves

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF GLOVE</th>
<th>WHEN TO WEAR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-sterile gloves for patient care activities</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nitrile</td>
<td>Activities when it can be reasonably anticipated that healthcare workers’ hands will come into contact with blood, body fluids or other potentially infectious materials, mucous membranes, and non-intact skin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vinyl (assessed and supplied as suitable for use in healthcare)</td>
<td>NOTE: Do NOT use latex gloves if patient or healthcare worker has a latex allergy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latex</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-sterile gloves for safe handling of food and cleaning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Polyethylene (plastic)</td>
<td>When preparing or serving food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heavy duty reusable gloves</td>
<td>Environmental and equipment cleaning</td>
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