

Infection prevention and control (IPC)

i *Appropriate personal protective equipment when in close contact with COVID-19 cases includes standard, droplet and contact precautions.*

i *Aerosol-generating procedures require aerosol precautions to be taken, including the use of an N95 respirator or equivalent.*

IPC is a critical and integral part of clinical management of patients and should be initiated at the point of entry of the patient to hospital (typically the Emergency Department). **A combination of standard, contact and droplet precautions should be practiced for all COVID-19 cases, and further precautions when performing aerosol-generating procedures (AGP).**

Standard precautions are used to prevent or minimize transmission of pathogens at all times and should be applied to all patients in healthcare facilities irrespective of their diagnosis or status. These include hand hygiene, appropriate use of PPE, safe handling of sharps, linen and waste, disinfection of patient care articles, respiratory hygiene, occupational health and injection safety.

Transmission-based precautions - droplet, and contact:

- Hand hygiene is the first and most essential aspect
- Healthcare worker PPE consists of gloves, gown (or apron), and a medical mask.
- Safe waste management
- Use either disposable or dedicated equipment (e.g. stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs and thermometers). If equipment needs to be shared among patients, clean and disinfect between each patient use.
- Limit patient movement within the institution (e.g. where possible, use portable X-rays rather than sending the patient to the X-ray department), and ensure that patients wear medical masks when outside their rooms.

Aerosol-generating procedures:

Aerosol precautions are required when performing aerosol-generating procedures. These include taking respiratory tract samples for SARS-CoV-2 testing (such as nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swabs), intubation, bronchoscopy, open suctioning of the respiratory tract, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Aerosol precautions for healthcare workers:

- Healthcare worker PPE consists of gloves, gown (or apron), a fit-tested particulate respirator (N95 respirator or equivalent), and eye protection (goggles or face shield).
- Use an adequately ventilated single room when performing aerosol-generating procedures, with spacing between beds of at least 1-1.5 metres.

A fuller discussion of IPC is beyond the scope of these guidelines. Comprehensive national IPC guidelines for COVID-19 are available at the NICD's website:

<https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/covid-19-guidelines/>