

Health Workers (HWs) AT-RISK for COVID-19

HWs can move from one group to another group depending on the activities they do

HIGH-RISK exposure HWs are those who have had prolonged close contact with known or unknown COVID-19 patients where the patient and the HW were not wearing a medical mask. HWs doing aerosol-generating procedures (AGPs) are considered high-risk as well.

MEDIUM-RISK exposures include HWs who had prolonged close contact with known or unknown COVID-19 patients who were wearing a medical mask while the HW was exposed to potentially infectious bodily fluids with SARS-CoV-2.

LOW-RISK exposures refer to HWs with brief interactions with known or unknown COVID-19 patients or prolonged close contact with COVID-19 patients who were wearing a medical mask while HWs were also wearing a medical mask or respirator.

Who are these HWs: Frontline, Emergency and In-patient HWs; Dentists and Dental Assistants; Laboratory personnel handling suspected COVID-19 specimens; Mortuary Workers; Porters; Waste Management Workers; Hospital Security, Cleaning and Laundry Staff; Allied HWs; HWs working in medical wards and long-term care facilities.

All EMPLOYERS should undertake a **WORKPLACE ASSESSMENT** and a **WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT** to reduce the risk to HWs



Workforce Vulnerability Assessment (Assessment to be done ethically & confidentially by a medical practitioner if a medical condition is present)

Very High Vulnerability

- Solid organ transplant recipients.
- People on immunosuppressive treatment (Rx).
- People with blood or bone cancers or on cancer Rx.
- Severe respiratory conditions (cystic fibrosis, severe asthma/COPD/TB).
- Inborn errors of metabolism that ↑ risk of infections.
- Pregnant women with significant congenital or acquired heart disease.

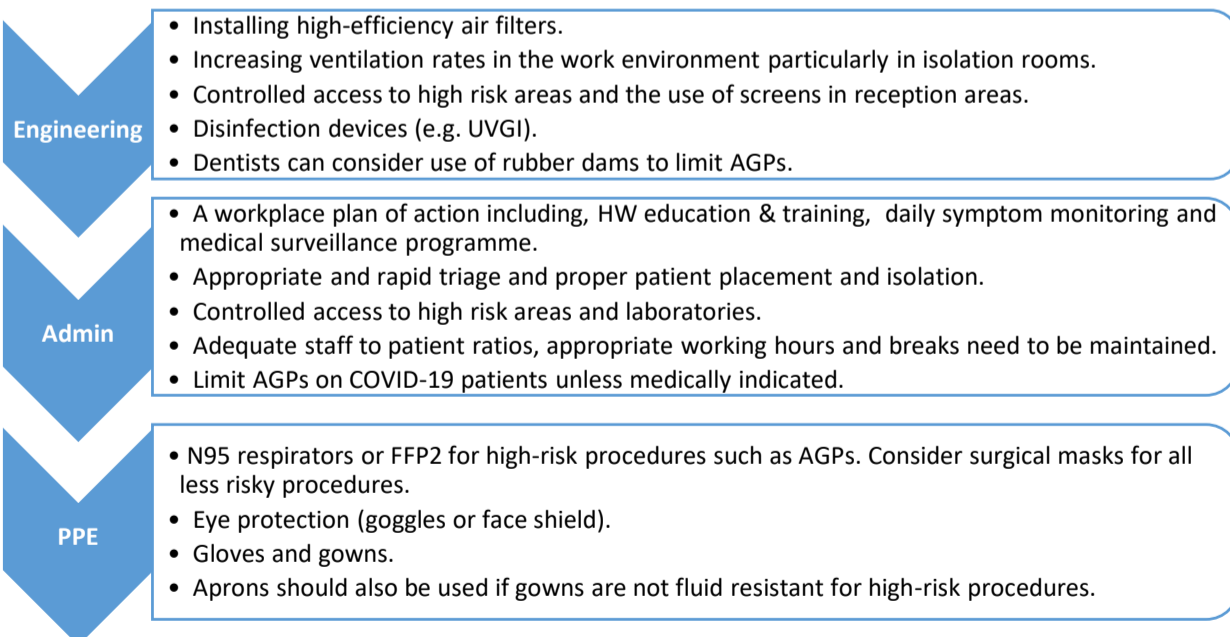
High Vulnerability

- Age >60 years.
- Chronic lung problems (moderate severe asthma, previous complicated TB, etc.).
- Serious heart conditions.
- Severe obesity (BMI >40).
- Moderate to intermittent immunocompromised (e.g. HIV+).
- Underlying medical condition- not well controlled e.g. (diabetes, hypertension, renal or liver failure).
- >28 weeks pregnant.

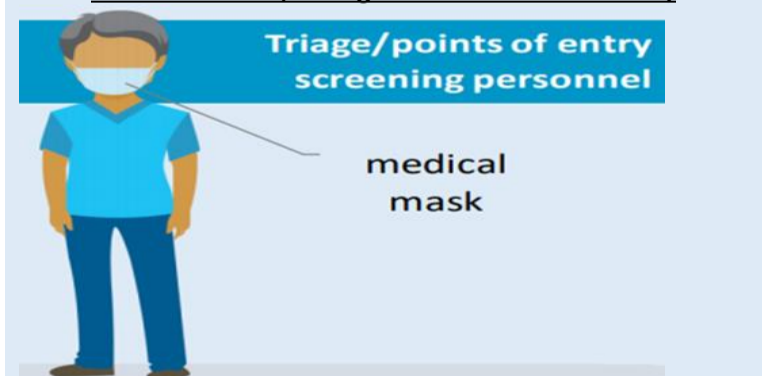
Medium and Low Vulnerability

- <28 weeks pregnant, but healthy.
- 40-60 years with controlled medical conditions (e.g. hypertension, diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, etc.).
- Previous lung TB, but recovered without complications.
- **LOW VULNERABILITY**
- Healthy, young.

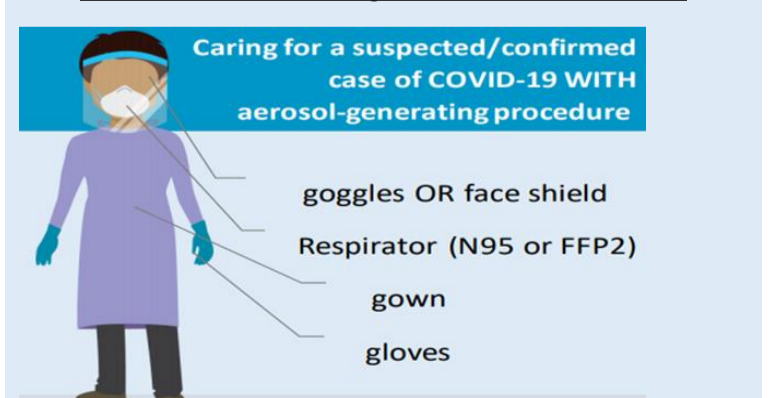
Workplace Assessment (Hierarchy of Controls)



Example of PPE used for a low-risk HW (or as informed by a risk assessment, taking into account all hazards)



Example of PPE used for a high-risk HW (or as informed by a risk assessment, taking into account all hazards)



REFERENCES:

World Health Organization. Rational use of personal protective equipment for coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and considerations during severe shortages, 6 April 2020. World Health Organization; 2020.
US Department of Health Center for Diseases Control. Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendation for Patients with Confirmed Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) or Persons Under Investigations for COVID-19 in Healthcare Settings. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/infection-control/control-recommendations.html>. Update May 18, 2020, Last accessed June 2020
Protecting HCWs-strategy for the frontline against COVID-19 v2 (UKZN document)