

# Plastic Aprons for Standard Precautions



## STANDARD PRECAUTIONS – PLASTIC APRONS VS LONG SLEEVED GOWNS

International and Australian infection control guidelines recommend that protective clothing (plastic apron or long-sleeved gown) be worn by all healthcare workers when:

1. Close contact with the patient, materials or equipment that may lead to contamination of skin, uniforms, or other clothing with infectious organisms (known and unknown)
2. There is a risk of contamination with blood and body substances, secretions, and excretions (excluding sweat).

Table 1: Recommended use & characteristics of plastic aprons & long-sleeved gowns

| Type                     | Recommended use                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Characteristics                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <b>Plastic apron</b>     | <p>Worn as part of <b>Standard Precautions</b> when there is the possibility of sprays or spills or exposure to blood or body substances during low risk procedures</p> <p>Worn as part of <b>Standard Precautions</b> when close direct patient contact is likely or contact with the patient environment when clothing may become contaminated</p> <p>Worn while attending to patients colonised or infected with <b>multi-resistant organisms</b> when the patient has <b>no infectious risk factors</b> requiring isolation</p>                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluid impervious</li><li>• Single use, for one procedure or episode of patient care</li><li>• Disposable</li></ul> <p><b>Bend head forward slightly to chest, to apply apron over face shield. Snap at neck to remove.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Long-sleeved gown</b> | <p>Worn to protect the healthcare workers exposed body areas and prevent contamination of clothing with blood, body substances and other potentially infectious materials</p> <p>Worn when there is a risk of contact of the healthcare worker's skin with a patient's broken skin, extensive skin to skin contact with an infectious patient (MRSA, Scabies), or a risk of contact with bloody and body substances which are not contained.</p> <p>Worn during <b>Contact Precautions</b> for multi-resistant organisms or diarrhoea when the patient has infectious risk factors requiring isolation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fluid impervious</li><li>• Single use</li><li>• Disposable</li><li>• Always worn in combination with gloves and other PPE where indicated</li></ul> <p><b>Do not need to be changed between COVID-19 patients that are cohorted but must be changed if other infectious risks such as MRSA, VRE, ESBL, CPO, C.auris, C.diff have been identified or gown visibly soiled</b></p> |



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**Table 2: Examples of when plastic aprons would be worn, but not limited to below**

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| <p><b>Plastic Gowns - Standard Precautions</b></p>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washing a patient in bed</li> <li>• Showering a patient</li> <li>• Toileting a patient</li> <li>• Making a patient's bed</li> <li>• Carrying patient bed linen</li> <li>• Assisting a patient out of bed if there is contact with the patient and your clothing</li> <li>• Assisting a patient ambulating if there is close contact with the patient and your clothing</li> <li>• Assisting a patient to dress with close direct contact</li> <li>• Rolling a patient in bed or assisting them to sit up or sit forward for examinations</li> <li>• Simple aseptic technique procedures that do not require sterile gowns (wound dressings, IV cannulations etc)</li> <li>• Performing procedures on a patient where HCW clothing comes into direct contact with patient</li> <li>• Handling patient materials or equipment that may lead to contamination of skin, uniforms, or scrubs from infectious agents (known or unknown)</li> <li>• Where there is a <b>potential risk</b> of contamination to clothing from blood, body substances, secretions, including droplets, or excretions (except sweat)</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Plastic Gowns – for low risk multidrug resistant organisms</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For care of patients colonised or infected with multi resistant organisms (MRSA, VRE, ESBL) with low risk factors for transmission to other patients via healthcare worker clothing, hands, or uncleaned shared patient equipment             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>MRSA</b> – when wounds are able to be contained in a dressing without leakage, for patients with intact skin, and when patient has no exfoliating skin conditions</li> <li>○ <b>ESBL and VRE</b> – no loose bowels or for those patients with faecal incontinence that can be contained within continence aids</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**N.B. Gloves must always be changed between episodes of care with a patient as per 5 Moments of Hand Hygiene and between each patient with hand hygiene prior to donning a new pair of gloves. Gloves must never be disinfected with hand rub in place of changing them and performing hand hygiene.**

**REFERENCES**

[Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](#), Canberra: National Health and Medical Research Council (2019)

[epic3: National Evidence-Based Guidelines for Preventing Healthcare-Associated Infections in NHS Hospitals in England](#) H.P. Lovedaya \*, J.A. Wilsona , R.J. Pratta , M. Golsorkhia , A. Tinglea , A. Baka , J. Brownea , J. Prietob, M. Wilcox