



# Coronavirus (COVID-19): Information for providers on the use of Personal Protective Equipment

The following information has been cleared by the Australian Government Department of Health.

## Availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Australia

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) is the key decision making committee for health emergencies. It is made up of all state and territory Chief Health Officers and is chaired by the Australian Chief Medical Officer.

On 25 March 2020 AHPPC released a statement recommending the cancellation of elective surgery. This is a measure to respond to the continued depletion of the National Medical Stockpile and the limited supply of PPE in Australia.

The AHPPC has prioritised PPE access for primary health workers.

Due to limited supply on PPE in Australia all providers of supports to vulnerable people with disabilities including NDIS participants should carefully consider the need for PPE based on the advice that follows.

## What is being done to prioritise access to PPE to support people at greatest risk from COVID-19 infection?

NDIS providers and self-managing participants who use PPE as a usual part of their support arrangements should continue to access PPE through their usual means. Where this is no longer possible, they should approach the National Medical Stockpile (NMS).

The NDIS Commission and the Department of Social Services are working with the NMS to make sure information is available about providers that are supporting participants whose conditions make them more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, based on Department of Health criteria. That information will assist the NMS in prioritising assessment of applications for access to PPE as it becomes available.

The Department of Social Services is also providing expertise on disability services, including the NDIS, to the Stockpile to assist in assessment of applications.

Access to PPE will also be prioritised for those NDIS providers who deliver personal care and other activities that require close physical contact where there is an immediate threat to continuity of safe quality care due to lack of access to PPE, or where the participant has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19.

**NDIS providers and self-managing participants who can no longer access PPE supplies through usual means can contact the NMS by emailing [NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au](mailto:NDISCOVIDPPE@health.gov.au).**



## When should disability support workers use PPE?

Outside of usual clinical care requirements, there is no requirement for workers supporting NDIS participants to wear surgical masks or other items of PPE unless they are working with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19, and:

- supports being provided are essential to the participant's life, health or safety
- contact between people exceeds Australian Government Department of Health guidelines for social distancing or isolation.

It is recommended that NDIS and disability support providers delivering supports to people in residential settings follow the interim advice from the Australian Government Department of Health on the care of people with suspected or confirmed COVID-19.

Where a worker is suspected of having been exposed to COVID-19 or is displaying symptoms of COVID-19, they should not be providing direct support to NDIS participants. PPE is not an appropriate solution to workers in this situation.

## If there are limitations on PPE supply, how do I get access to PPE to support a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?

The National Medical Stockpile will consider applications for access to PPE from disability providers, prioritising access to those providers that have a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case and are delivering accommodation support in a shared or group setting, and where providers can demonstrate that:

- they have been unable to source PPE through the open market
- existing stocks have been depleted
- who the requested masks are intended for
- how the masks are to be prioritised and distributed in order to minimise transmission to greatest effect
- how previous Stockpile stocks (if applicable) have been used efficiently and effectively.

## How can I find information about risk of infection in the locations that I provide services?

Some Departments of Health in states and territories are issuing information on the distribution of confirmed cases in local areas across their states. You can find information about case levels in [NSW](#), [Queensland](#) and [Victoria](#).

## More information

For the latest advice, information and resources go to the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) website.

Call the National Coronavirus Health Information Line on **1800 020 080**. It operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you require translating or interpreting services, call 131 450.

The phone number of each state or territory public health agency is available on the [Department of Health](#) website.

Information for NDIS participants and providers is available on the [NDIS](#) website and the [NDIS Commission](#) website.

The [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information webpage](#) on the NDIS Commission website contains links to updates, training, alerts and other resources.