

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recommendations for caregivers to preserve PPE and alternatives when face masks are not available

Per the CDC:

Implement limited re-use of face masks.

- Face masks with elastic ear hooks may be suitable for re-use if they are not soiled or damaged.
- Face masks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage. The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container.

Prioritize face masks for selected activities such as:

- During care activities where splashes and sprays are anticipated.
- During activities where prolonged face-to-face or close contact with a potentially infectious patient is unavoidable.

If you do not have any face masks:

- If you are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, talk to your home care agency or client about finding another caregiver temporarily.
- For agencies looking for a temporary caregiver to care for a sick client, designate a caregiver who has recovered from COVID-19, if one is available. The recovered person may have better immunity to COVID-19, though it isn't confirmed.
- If face masks are not available, caregivers might use homemade masks (e.g., bandana, scarf) for care of patients with COVID-19 as a **last resort**. Homemade masks should be used in combination with a face shield that covers the entire front (that extends to the chin or below) and sides of the face. For more information, see [Department of Health guidance](#).

For additional guidance, contact your local health department.