

# Appropriate Glove Use in Health Care

## What gloves are used in healthcare?

Gloves used in healthcare are defined as single use disposable gloves and are used during medical procedures or provision of care. These include:

- > examination gloves (sterile or non-sterile)
- > sterile surgical gloves that have specific characteristics of thickness, elasticity and strength
- > chemotherapy gloves – not addressed within this document.

## Why wear gloves?

1. To reduce the risk of contamination of healthcare worker hands with blood and body fluids, including contact with mucous membranes and non-intact skin.
2. When indicated as part of contact precautions, to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious agents to the patient's environment and to other patients.

## Facts about glove use

- > Gloves can act as a vehicle for the transmission of micro-organisms so must be removed and hand hygiene performed as soon as an episode of patient care is completed and prior to leaving the patient room/area.
- > Gloves do not provide complete protection against hand contamination due to microscopic defects in the glove material. Therefore hand hygiene is required after removal.
- > Any cuts or abrasions present on hands should be covered with an occlusive dressing prior to donning gloves.
- > Gloves should be used during all patient activities that may involve exposure to blood and all other body fluids (excluding sweat) including contact with mucous membranes and non-intact skin.
- > Gloves need to be removed when contact with blood or another body fluid, mucous membranes or non-intact skin has ended.
- > Gloves must be removed when moving from a contaminated body site to another site (including mucous membranes, non-intact skin or a medical device) on the same patient.
- > If gloves are damaged then they should be removed immediately and hand hygiene performed before replacing gloves.
- > Gloves are also required when providing any care for all patients requiring contact precautions.
- > **The same pair of gloves must not be worn for the care of more than one patient.**



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Gloves are **NOT** indicated when performing the following tasks (except when required for contact precautions or if blood or body fluid exposure is anticipated):

Exposure type	Example
Direct patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; taking blood pressure</li><li>&gt; taking observations i.e. temperature, pulse</li><li>&gt; SC and IM injections</li><li>&gt; bathing and dressing</li><li>&gt; transporting a patient</li><li>&gt; caring for eyes and ears (without secretions)</li><li>&gt; any vascular access device manipulation (in the absence of blood leakage)</li></ul>
Indirect patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; using the telephone</li><li>&gt; writing in the patient chart</li><li>&gt; giving oral medication</li><li>&gt; distributing or collecting patient meal trays</li><li>&gt; placing non-invasive ventilation or oxygen equipment</li><li>&gt; moving patient furniture</li></ul>

**Unnecessary and inappropriate use of gloves can:**

- > increase skin issues such as dermatitis
- > lead to unnecessary use of resources and increased costs
- > lead to missed opportunities for hand hygiene

## References

National Health and Medical Research Council, ed. Australian guidelines for the prevention and control of infection in healthcare. 2010, Commonwealth of Australia: Canberra. Available at: <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/cd33>

Royal College of Nursing. RCN guidance for healthcare staff on glove use and the prevention of contact dermatitis. 2012. Available at: [http://www2.rcn.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/450507/RCNguidance\\_glovesdermatitis\\_WEB2.pdf](http://www2.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/450507/RCNguidance_glovesdermatitis_WEB2.pdf)

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## For more information

**Infection Control Service**  
**Communicable Disease Control Branch**  
**Department for Health and Ageing**  
**Telephone: 1300 232 272**  
**[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/infectionprevention](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/infectionprevention)**



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