

# Fact Sheet for health care professionals

# 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.**



**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 exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ taking blood pressure</li> <li>➤ taking observations i.e., temperature, pulse</li> <li>➤ SC and IM injections</li> <li>➤ bathing and dressing</li> <li>➤ transporting a patient</li> <li>➤ caring for eyes and ears (without secretions)</li> <li>➤ any vascular access device manipulation (in the absence of blood leakage)</li> </ul>
Indirect patient exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ using the telephone</li> <li>➤ writing in the patient chart</li> <li>➤ giving oral medication</li> <li>➤ distributing or collecting patient meal trays</li> <li>➤ placing non-invasive ventilation or oxygen equipment</li> <li>➤ moving patient furniture</li> </ul>
<p><b>Unnecessary and inappropriate use of gloves can:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ increase skin issues such as dermatitis.</li> <li>➤ lead to unnecessary use of resources and increased costs</li> <li>➤ lead to missed opportunities for hand hygiene</li> </ul>	

## References

- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care [Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](#)
- Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care: [Glove use and Hand Hygiene](#)
- Royal College of Nursing: [Tools of the Trade Guidance for health care staff on glove use and the prevention of contact dermatitis](#)
- World Health Organisation: [Glove use information leaflet \(revised August 2009\) \(who.int\)](#)

## For more information

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

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