

Infection Prevention Measures and Community Transmission Rates

Some infection control guidance is linked to the level of COVID-19 transmission rates in the community. Thus, COVID-19 community transmission rates guide infection prevention and control efforts. CMS memo [QSO-20-38-NH-REVISED](#) references testing residents and staff and outlines expectations that correspond with the level of community transmission.

Nursing homes must use *Community Transmission Rates* and follow the [CDC's infection prevention and control recommendations](#). Follow these steps to access data to comply with the requirements for COVID-19 testing in your facility: 1) Access the [CDC COVID Data Tracker: County View](#) and select your state and county. 2) Look below the "Weekly Metrics" for the county you selected for the "Data Type" dropdown box. 3) Change the "Data Type" to "Community Transmission" to view the color-coded map.

Staff should choose personal protective equipment (PPE) based on a resident's health status and the current community transmission rate. Following are two scenarios and recommended PPE for each.

Scenario: The healthcare worker is assigned to a COVID-19 unit or to a resident suspected of or positive for COVID-19 **OR** the nursing home is in an area with substantial or high community transmission rates.

Recommended Face Covering: N95 Respirator

Perform a fit test before the first use and at least once a year

- ✓ Perform a seal check with each use
- ✓ Review the [Respirator Fit Testing resource](#) to understand the difference between a fit test and a seal check
- ✓ Do not wear a surgical mask or cloth mask under an N95
- ✓ Throw out a respirator that is soiled or damaged
- ✓ Perform hand hygiene before putting on an N95 respirator
- ✓ Avoid touching your face when taking off your respirator
- ✓ Perform hand hygiene after removing your N95 respirator



Additional PPE When Working on a COVID Unit or with a Resident Positive for or Suspected of COVID-19:

- ✓ Gown and gloves
- ✓ Goggles or face shield (that covers the front and sides of face)

Tips:

- ✓ Gowns and gloves are single use
- ✓ Goggles and face shields must be cleaned between caring for residents, using manufacturer's instructions

Scenario: The healthcare worker is **NOT** caring for a resident suspected of or confirmed with COVID-19 and the nursing home is **NOT** experiencing an active COVID-19 outbreak, and the community transmission is **NOT** substantial or high.

Recommended Face Covering: Surgical Mask

- ✓ Throw away after each resident encounter
- ✓ Perform hand hygiene before putting on a mask
- ✓ Avoid wearing a mask that is soiled or damaged
- ✓ Make sure your mask fits properly when you put it on so there is no need to readjust it once you are wearing it
- ✓ Avoid touching your face when taking off your mask
- ✓ Perform hand hygiene after removing your mask



NOTE: Textile (cloth) masks are intended primarily for source control in the community. They are not PPE appropriate for use by healthcare personnel.