

### Question submitted to RapidInfo4U

Could you please provide clarity on the proper disposal of PPE?

What type of bin should be used? Can certain types of PPE be disposed in domestic bins (e.g. masks)?

### Short Answer

If PPE is worn with a person who is known or suspected to have COVID-19 then it should be disposed of in a healthcare risk waste bin (yellow). If a healthcare risk waste bin is unavailable, the following procedure should be followed:

1. All items of PPE should be disposed of into a plastic bag
2. The bag should not be filled more than three quarters full
3. The bag should be securely tied and placed inside another second, plastic bag (double bag)
4. The bag should be stored securely for 72 hours and can then be disposed of with general domestic waste

If PPE is worn in the absence of a specific known risk of COVID-19 it can be discarded immediately as general domestic waste. There is no distinction made between different types of PPE in terms of disposal procedures.

### Long answer

The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) published guidance for the management of COVID-19 in September of this year [1]. This lengthy document has a waste management section (3.1.7, p. 104) but does not specifically refer to disposal of PPE, it outlines the following:

*Waste should be contained in the appropriate receptacle, identified by colour and label, and disposed of according to the facility waste management plan. Healthcare workers should be trained in the correct procedures for waste handling. Regardless of where waste is generated (for example from isolation*

*rooms versus routine patient care areas) the principles of determining whether it is to be treated as healthcare risk waste or general waste remain the same.*

The HPSC published a second document in September, titled: *Acute Hospital Infection Prevention and Control Precautions for Possible or Confirmed COVID-19 in a Pandemic Setting* [2]. This document states that all PPE worn with a known or suspected COVID-19 case should be disposed of in a healthcare risk waste bin (p. 36).

Other HSE sources outline best practice for disposing of PPE during the COVID-19 pandemic. These include an education programme from the HSE Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control Team on home visits [3]; a HPSC guidance document on the use of surgical masks [4]; and a HPSC guidance document on the use of PPE in Disability Services [5]. These documents have the following guidelines for PPE disposal in circumstances where a healthcare risk waste bin is *not* available:

1. All items of PPE should be disposed of into a plastic bag
2. The bag should not be filled more than three quarters full
3. The bag should be securely tied and placed inside another second plastic bag (double bag)
4. This bag should be stored securely for 72 hours and can then disposed of with domestic waste

The HPSC guidance document on the use of surgical masks [4] states that if PPE is worn in the absence of a specific known risk of infectious disease, such as COVID-19, it can be discarded immediately as general domestic waste. This is also stated in the HPSC poster 'Safe use of Masks' which refers to all PPE and clearly outlines the above steps. The poster is available [here](#). There is no distinction made between different types of PPE in terms of disposal procedures in any of the documents.

### *Disclaimer*

This document has not been peer-reviewed; it should not replace individual clinical judgement. The views expressed in this document are not a substitute for professional medical advice. The content of this document is correct as of 11/12/20

### *Rapid Evidence Search & Summary (RESS)*

Our team of multidisciplinary researchers and clinicians in conjunction with the University of Limerick Library and Information Services have developed a detailed protocol for conducting a Rapid Evidence Search & Summary (RESS) to answer questions submitted to RapidInfo4U. Our RESS protocol uses PICO or PEO methods to refine your question and follows a detailed search procedure capturing guidance documents from governments, institutions and professional bodies; searching clinical and COVID specific repositories; and identifying the most recent reviews and RCTs in the scientific literature using established databases.

### References

1. Health Protection Surveillance Centre (2020). *Interim Guidance on Infection Prevention and Control for the Health Service Executive 2020 v1.2*. HSE: September 2020. Access [here](#).
2. Acute Hospital Infection Prevention and Control Precautions for Possible or Confirmed COVID-19 in a Pandemic Setting V.1.5. 22nd September 2020. Access [here](#).
3. Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control Team (2020). *Education programme on COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Home visits*. HSE: Access [here](#).
4. Health Protection Surveillance Centre (2020). *Guidance on the use of Surgical Masks when healthcare is being provided in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic V2*. HSE: April 2020. Access [here](#).
5. *Guidance on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Disability Services v.4*. HSE October 2020. Access [here](#).