

Protecting your Home for Healthcare Workers

One of the primary concerns of all health care providers during a pandemic, is the health and safety of their family and loved ones. These are protocols that are currently being used by those who have the potential to be exposed while working.

1. Follow infection control protocols at work.

Hair – Control hair by tying it back or wearing a surgical cap or hair net (not required unless your hair is long enough to get into things). Men should be shaven or consider wearing a beard cover (you also can't get a mask or N95 respirator to fit if unshaven).

Jewelry – Don't wear jewelry.

Phones, iPads, computers – Be aware that phones and pads are touched a LOT. Clean them regularly and/or protect them with disposable covers. Clean all your work surfaces several times during the day, avoid touching most surfaces, and WASH YOUR HANDS!

Work equipment – Stethoscopes are going to be contaminated so don't wear them around your neck and clean them after each use with a disinfectant wipe. Also don't wear your surgical mask or N95 around your neck. It may be time to bring your own lunch rather than eat cafeteria food, (self-explanatory). Don't bring your knitting, books, guitar, or other personal items. Leave them at home.

2. Clothing

After work – Do not wear the same clothes or scrubs home after working. If possible, shower before leaving the healthcare facility and change into street clothes. If the healthcare facility doesn't offer laundry services, take work clothes home in a sealed plastic bag. Don't reuse this bag – dispose of it each time.

Home laundry – Isolate your clothes from household laundry and wash them separately in a bleach-based laundry soap. After laundering, work clothes can be handled and managed as normal. When bleach based laundry soaps are used, there should be no concern about using the washing machine and dryer for other laundry.

3. Home hygiene

Wearing work clothes home – If you have to wear work clothes home, use an area with limited access as the "warm zone." Use a garage entry, back door into a hallway – something that others will not use if possible. Enter that area, remove external clothes and place them in the laundry isolated from other household laundry. If personal work items, like stethoscopes are brought into the house, place them in a paper bag or basket in the "warm room" after cleaning them yet again. Clean your keys and put them in a location out of the reach of kids. Then, go directly to a shower. After carefully washing your hands FIRST, wash your face (around eyes, nose, and mouth). Then the rest of you. You do not need to use disinfectants or harsh chemicals – or even "antibacterial soap." Just use a good lathering soap and warm water. Some clinicians have elected to live away from their families during this event – and depending on your situation – you might want to consider this.

Note, there have been reports in some parts of the country of healthcare providers (Doctors, Nurses, APCs, Techs) being verbally and physically assaulted outside of the facility while getting gas, shopping etc. Don't look like a healthcare worker when you go out in public. Even on your way to and from work. It is a crazy time – don't give some frightened or unstable individual a reason to act out.

For more information, the CDC has created general recommendations: