# A screen shot of a computer Description automatically generatedpersonal protective equipment: healthcare

Healthcare professionals wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect against infectious materials. PPE is considered appropriate if it does not allow blood or other potentially infectious materials to pass through, reaching the wearer’s clothes, skin, eyes, mouth or other mucous membranes.

**Selection and use of PPE:**  
Depending on the circumstances, PPE might include gloves, gowns, lab coats, face masks or shields, protective eyewear, pocket masks or other protective equipment. The PPE selected must fit the expected exposure. For example, gloves may be the only PPE needed for a nurse who is drawing blood; however, a nurse irrigating a wound would require much more protective clothing because of the different types of exposure (ex. splashes, sprays) and the increased amount of blood and other potentially infectious materials. PPE should be readily available and be provided in appropriate sizes.

**Gloves:**  
Replace gloves as needed. If gloves are torn or heavily soiled and further patient care is required, change the gloves before beginning the next task. Always change gloves between caring for different patients. Never attempt to wash and reuse gloves. Cleaning a pair of gloves does not make them safe for reuse; it may not be possible to eliminate all microorganisms and washing can make the gloves more prone to tearing or leaking. Be aware that sharp objects can puncture medical gloves. After you discard the gloves, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.

**Eye Protection:**  
Safety glasses, shields and goggles provide a barrier of protection for the eyes; personal prescriptive lenses do not provide optimal eye protection and should not be used as a substitute for safety glasses. When worn appropriately, goggles fit snugly over and around the eyes or personal prescription lenses. Goggles with anti-fog features will help maintain clarity of vision.

**Facemasks:**  
Facemasks are meant to help block large-particle droplets, splashes, sprays or splatter that may contain germs (viruses and bacteria), keeping it from reaching your mouth and nose. Facemasks may help reduce exposure of your saliva and respiratory secretions to others. Facemasks are not designed to be used more than once. If your mask is damaged or soiled, you should remove the facemask, discard it and replace it with a new one. A face shield can be used in place of a mask or goggles. The face shield should cover the forehead, extend below the chin and wraparound the side of the face.

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