

Montana Nurses Association  
4/3/2020

MNA encourages no Nurse, Healthcare worker or First Responder to render care for a probable Covid-19 or confirmed Covid-19 infected patient without the proper PPE. It will do our coworkers, facilities, and patients no good for you to become infected and take up a much needed bed or ventilator. With this said, we will attempt to address this situation as best we understand it, knowing information surrounding this new virus changes by the hour.

According to the CDC and what we currently understand about COVID-19 is that it spreads person-to-person among close contacts via large respiratory droplets produced from coughs or sneezes. It also spreads via touching infected surfaces and then touching your nose, mouth, or eyes. These are the two most common ways for this virus to spread as the viral load is greatest. It also may be spread in these ways by individuals who are not experiencing any symptoms.

Coughing and sneezing can cause the virus to spray or launch into the air in the form of **large droplets** which a surgical (procedure) mask is designed to protect against.

Aerosolizing events, such as ventilation, nebulizers, and intubation, can cause the virus to spray or launch into the air in the form of much **smaller droplets**, therefore increasing the amount of virus and the time the virus can be suspended in air. Due to the length of time it can remain suspended in the air, it can increase the potential density of the virus exposure during these types of procedures, as opposed to coughing and sneezing. This is the reason the N95 respirator is the preferred protection for aerosolizing events.

Covid-19 has an incubation period that lasts 2-14 days. Common symptoms associated with COVID-19 infection include mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. As we are navigating this pandemic together, we are sharing healthcare recommendations as we learn and understand them, and are offering suggestions to all our Montana citizens to help flatten the curve.

**PPE (personal protective equipment) highlights for Nurses, Healthcare Workers, and First Responders as we currently understand them (knowing this often changes):**

- We should treat every person as if they are Covid-19 positive, symptomatic or not.
- With suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19 patients, nurses and healthcare workers can use a **surgical mask** with face shield, gloves, and gown and CDC states that will protect the provider while caring for the patient, furthermore, if the patient is coughing or sneezing, have the patient also don a surgical mask to increase protection.
- The above recommendation changes from a surgical mask to an **N95 respirator** with face shield, gloves, and gown when aerosolizing procedures are needed like intubation, ventilation, or med nebulizer treatments.
- Cloth/homemade masks for nurses and healthcare workers should NOT be used as a substitute for PPE!

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### **MNA's Suggestions for the General Public:**

- Staying at home is crucial!
- Continue to (and encourage others ) to wash hands, keep social distance (min 6 ft), and DO NOT touch your face (eyes, nose, and mouth)
- If you are symptomatic, call your primary care provider BEFORE going into their office.
- If you are well, consider making a blood donation
- Consider donating homemade masks to essential businesses and have those businesses dispense these masks to the customers for use. This would help preserve surgical masks and N95 masks to be utilized by the nurses, healthcare workers, and first responders on the frontline providing care to patients in need.

#### **Tips for going out:**

- Cloth/homemade masks could be utilized by those needing to shop for essentials for themselves or others they may be caring for.
- The public could benefit from everyone wearing a mask, when going out in public, to prevent further spread. A cloth mask is not a tool that will protect you from being exposed to the virus, but may discourage you from touching your face and may help protect others from potentially getting exposed from you, as we know that spread of this virus can occur in the absence of symptoms.
- Wash your hands, cover your nose and mouth with your homemade mask and do not remove it until you return home. Once you are home, remove your mask, put it into the wash, and then wash your hands. This mask will help remind you not to touch your nose and mouth while you are out and about touching surfaces.
- **ALERT: Keep social distancing whether you wear a mask or not, this is critical.**

### **When to Seek Medical Attention**

If you develop **emergency warning signs** for COVID-19 get **medical attention immediately**.  
Emergency warning signs include\*:

- Trouble breathing
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or inability to arouse
- Bluish lips or face

\*This list is not all inclusive. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

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MNA also wants to update you all on a call we had yesterday with Senator Daines and his staff. MNA President Lorri Bennett, RN along with myself and 3 other staff members (Leslie Shepherd, RN, Robin Haux, and Jennifer Hamilton) were able to share concerns we are hearing from nurses and other healthcare workers from across our state daily.

The top priority we shared from our nurses was the lack of PPE and testing. Senator Daines spoke about a phone call he took with Dr. Fauci and noted that the national stockpile is very low, as they have pushed those resources out to the front lines, but that they are working on replenishing it. Senator Daines shares our concerns over the need for more Covid testing and PPE as these tools are the much needed interventions to contain and wrap our arms around this deadly virus. He stated that he supports widespread testing to expand the capacity on testing especially for all nurses, healthcare workers, and first responders.

An important takeaway from this conversation was asking the Senator specifically about the Defense Protection Act and if he would push President Trump to invoke it to address the shortage in testing and PPE supplies and his answer was **Yes!** MNA is appreciative of this advocacy. Senator Daines assured us he will get our voice heard by the Trump Administration and MNA will continue to communicate our nurses and other healthcare workers concerns to them. He is engaged on these issues and will continue to be.

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- Please continue to check the [MNA website](#) for local, state, and national updates.
- Nurse Liability Insurance: As many nurses have been inquiring about liability insurance, now may be a good time to consider this inexpensive coverage as an RN or APRN. Please call NSO (Nurse Service Organization) at 800-247-1500 or email [service@nso.com](mailto:service@nso.com) and they can answer any questions you may have.

I am repeating this alert...

- **ALERT!** If asked by any press or anyone wanting footage of your facility, please decline and contact our office immediately.  
(Ask for Vicky or Robin)

Sincerely,  
*Vicky Byrd, MSN, RN*  
CEO, Montana Nurses Association