

# To Glove or Not To Glove

Information provided by the Office of Homeland Security and Occupational Safety,  
Occupational Safety and Health Division

## Disposable Glove Use

During the COVID-19 pandemic, more and more people want to know if they should wear disposable gloves to help protect themselves versus the COVID-19 pandemic. In the workplace, there are guidelines that employers and employees need to follow.

### Disposable gloves:

- Three different types of gloves mainly produced:
  - Nitrile (Best) and Vinyl (Better). **While Latex gloves exist, their wear is prohibited at MDOT SHA due to the risk as an allergen.**
- These gloves have different levels of protections assigned to them.
- Some gloves are more durable than others, and
- Some can cause an allergic reaction or **skin irritation from the glove powder.**

### Why am I using gloves?

- Is there a hazard assessment that requires gloves as a required piece of personal protective equipment (PPE)?
- Is there a hazard that my hand is going to encounter when I touch something or someone?
- Is there a non-hazardous residue or substance that my hand is going to encounter?
- Why do I want to cover my hands when hand washing is readily available?
- Will wearing gloves cause a greater hazard than what they may prevent?
- Is wearing gloves a comfort to me, providing a sense of safety, or is it a need?

### Are the gloves being used *voluntary* or are they being *required* to be worn?

- If the use is voluntary\*:
  - Employees can use either type at their own discretion, and/or
  - Employees are wearing them to feel safe.

*\*Note: This is not recommended because of all the potential issues that this could likely cause cross-contamination to other people or things, lack of understanding on how to don (put on) and doff (take off) the glove properly, lack of understanding the limitations of the glove, and lack of understanding the proper hand hygiene that goes with wearing the glove.*

- If the use is required:
  - Employee is told what type of glove to use,
  - Employee is told when to use the glove,
  - Employee is told how to maintain the glove,
  - Employee is trained how to don (put on) and doff (take off) the glove,
  - Employee is trained on the glove limitations, and
  - Employee must show proficiency in understanding the training of gloves.

### After the decision is reached on why gloves are being worn, the Pros and Cons need to be evaluated:

- Pros:
  - Disposable gloves provide a barrier between the employee and hazards (i.e. virus, residue, dirt, etc.),
  - Disposable gloves come in quantities of one hundred (100) per box per size, typically,
  - Disposable gloves are usually readily available and can be a cost-effective way to protect employees, and
  - When properly worn greatly reduce the contact between the employee and the virus on any object the employee may handle.

- Cons:
  - The biggest is the potential to cross-contaminate employees and products due to repeated touching of different objects, equipment, and personnel,
  - The potential to easily rip, exposing employees to hazards,
  - They can become costly over time depending on the amount of use by the employees (i.e. switching out after every contact with items, equipment, personnel, etc.),
  - They increase the waste being disposed of,
  - If not removed properly, they can contaminate the employee and others,
  - Potential for employee allergies such as latex or the powder in some of the disposable gloves could create a medical emergency, and
  - Hands need to be washed or hand sanitizer needs to be used after the use of disposable gloves to clean the hands from any potential contact with any hazards, residue, etc. and to maintain proper hand cleanliness (OSHA, n.d.).

**Finally, how to don and doff the gloves and proper disposal of the gloves when you are finished:**

- Donning
  - Acquire the glove to be worn,
  - Inspect the gloves for any hole, tears, rips, or any damage to them,
  - Insert hand that will be wearing the glove while the other hold the glove in place,
  - Make sure that all of your fingers go into their perspective glove fingers, and
  - Make sure the fit is secure, but flexible enough to use.
- Doffing
  - Take thumb and index finger of one hand and pinch the other hands glove at the bottom of the palm,
  - While the glove is pinched, lift the glove and begin sliding the glove off the hand,
    - The outside of the glove should not touch your skin, and
    - The glove should be coming off inside-out.
  - Continue to pull the glove off until it is completely off,
  - While the gloved hand still has the glove taken off, ball up the removed glove into the gloved hand without using the de-gloved hand,
  - Then take the index finger of the gloved hand and put it under the cuff of the glove and begin lifting and pulling the glove off the hand,
    - Remember, do not grab the outside of the glove,
    - The outside is rolled on top of itself, and
    - The inside will be on the outside.
  - Continue to remove the glove until it is completely off of your hand.
- Disposal
  - Take the balled-up inside-out gloves and dispose of them in the waste basket (trash can).
    - If there are chemicals on the glove, dispose of per the guidelines at your facility for chemical disposal (i.e. OMT Lab area).
    - If they have bodily fluids on them, place the gloves in a biohazard red bag or double bag them and contact the District Safety Compliance Officer for further instructions.

**In the two hyperlinks below, you will find the proper doffing of disposable gloves and a warning about cross-contamination while wearing disposable gloves. Please watch both videos.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyLEd9cng5U>

<https://youtu.be/6iFjNXUvGwE>

If there are any questions beyond what can be answered by this document, reach out to the local District Safety Compliance Officer or contact the Office of Homeland Security and Occupational Safety, Occupational Safety and Health Division at [SHASafetyTeam@mdot.maryland.gov](mailto:SHASafetyTeam@mdot.maryland.gov) and someone will respond to you within the hour of receipt of the email.