

# Healthcare Worker Attire

## Scrubs, uniforms and clothing

### Healthcare worker scrubs, uniforms and clothing for COVID-19 patients

As standard practice and in keeping with the principles of infection prevention and control, healthcare workers (HCW) and other staff working in a healthcare setting environment should wear a clean uniform or clothing (if a uniform is not worn) daily.

Uniforms or clothing should be changed as required during a shift e.g. if the uniform or clothing has become or is suspected of being contaminated or soiled.

All staff should adhere to standard and transmission-based precautions – this includes wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) over uniforms and clothing as indicated. The rationale for the wearing of PPE is that it minimises the risk of contamination of scrubs, uniforms and clothing.

Staff must ensure that their personal grooming does not interfere with the use of PPE or the performing of hand hygiene, this includes hair to be short or tied back off the neck and facial hair should be removed for the use of particulate filter respirator (PFR). As per [the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare](#) fingernails should be kept short and clean, nail polish or artificial fingernails should not be worn and staff are encouraged to wear short sleeved clothing to adhere to 'bare below the elbow' policies.

Disposable hair covers such as caps, bonnets or balaclavas should be risk assessed for use dependent upon the risk of exposure to blood or body fluids, aerosol generating procedures and as per usual practices involving full barrier precautions e.g. theatre, sterile procedures.

Jewellery must be kept to an absolute minimum in the clinical setting e.g. a plain band on the ring finger which must be removed prior to aseptic procedures, no wrist jewellery (if a watch is worn it must be removed for clinical care), neck jewellery must not be exposed outside of the clothing/uniform or PPE, facial piercings and earrings to be removed while working in the clinical area, especially if these items interfere with donning and doffing of PPE.

Footwear must comply with Worker Health and Safety (WH&S) recommendations and protect the wearer from potential hazards from splashes, penetration/piercing, rolling of heavy objects such as bed or trolley wheels etc. Footwear design should include a closed toe, non-slip sole, non-absorbent material, well fastened or fitted and comfortable to wear all shifts. The need for shoe covers or rubber boots should be risk assessed in each clinical setting, e.g. operating rooms or major trauma areas, taking into consideration the risk of splash or exposure to blood or body fluids.

Staff concerns in relation to this information should speak with their line manager.

#### For the purpose of this document working definitions of attire for workers is as below:

- > **Scrubs:** items of clothing generally used in operating theatres. These are supplied the healthcare facility (HCF) commercial linen supply company and are suitable for commercial washing.
- > **Uniforms:** items of clothing including SA Health "scrub like" uniforms that are supplied by a healthcare facility to create a consistent HCW appearance. These may not be suitable for commercial washing – refer to labelling.
- > **Clothing:** personal items of clothing that are not scrubs or uniforms.

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### Additional advice for staff attire during COVID-19

At a minimum all staff should wear clean attire daily, and in addition to this the recommended PPE in accordance with standard and transmission-based precautions. HCF may also conduct a risk assessment for staff working in higher risk settings or clinical situations, and recommend staff wear scrubs under the required PPE in place of standard uniforms or clothing.

**Note:** Scrubs may not be suitable where uniforms are mandatory e.g. South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS) etc.

### Uniforms or general clothing

Staff are required to wear a clean uniform or clothing daily (**Note:** the design of uniforms varies within each site, some appear to look like scrubs by their design they are not the same as theatre style scrubs and may not withstand commercial laundering processes).

Staff caring for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients who wear uniforms or general clothing should be risk assessed and encouraged to get changed at the beginning and end of their shift.

### HCF supplied scrubs for staff deemed as working in higher risk areas or clinical situations

Use of scrubs that can be supplied and laundered by the healthcare facility linen supply company can be considered for clinical staff working in areas with critically ill patients, e.g. those with symptoms suggestive of pneumonia or situations requiring aerosol-generating procedures. This could include areas such as:

- > Emergency Departments
- > Infectious Diseases wards
- > Respiratory wards
- > Intensive Care Units
- > Bronchoscopy Suites
- > Operating theatres
- > Any ward/unit/clinic or service identified as a higher risk area or performing higher risk procedures involving COVID-19 patients who are critically ill or requiring continual/extended episodes of care and or aerosol generating procedures (AGPs)
- > Medi-Hotels
- > COVID-19 testing clinics.

### Staff wearing HCF issued scrubs or changing into their uniform at the commencement of their shift would need to have access to the following

- > HCF issued scrub attire – tops and bottoms (assorted sizes)
- > Lockers or a space to store clothing worn to work
- > Access to change rooms/toilet/shower facilities which are routinely serviced and cleaned as per local policies and procedures
- > Alcohol-based hand rub and hand washing facilities to use before and after changing uniforms or scrub attire
- > Linen bags in trolleys for used scrubs
- > Plastic or washable bags with ties to transport their uniform home for laundering if not wearing scrubs

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### Laundering of HCF issued scrubs (e.g. worn in higher risk areas)

- > Commercial linen service supplied scrubs are not to worn home or taken home for laundering – they must be removed before leaving work and laundered by the healthcare facility's contracted laundry service.

### Laundering of HCF staff uniforms and clothing (e.g. worn in lower risk areas)

- > Staff wearing uniforms should change at the beginning and end of their shift.
- > Uniforms should be taken home in a disposable plastic bag for laundering and be laundered separately to other items and in accordance with manufacturers washing instructions. Preferably use a hot wash cycle with washing powder/detergent and dried on the clothesline or in a dryer.

### Other considerations

- > HCF can assess capacity to redirect the supply of commercial supplied scrubs to areas of higher risk and use existing staff change room facilities as elective surgery is ramped down and resources become available
- > Linen bags to be tied off once they are 2/3rds full and collected regularly by local support services
- > Scrubs or scrub like uniforms worn in higher risk areas, such any ward/unit/clinic described above or Medi-Hotels should not be worn outside of that area. Staff leaving work during shift times (e.g. for lunch) are required to change out of scrubs into civilian clothes
- > All other staff should be advised to minimise leaving the clinical area in their scrubs or uniforms as practicable.

### Preparation checklist

Approach current linen supplier to identify provision of ongoing supply of scrubs in relation to estimated needs	
Consider increased scrub availability due to ramping down of elective surgery	
Staff change rooms for staff to change into scrubs or uniform and store casual clothing which are serviced (cleaning and rubbish/linen collection) are available	
Used scrubs to be collected as per local policies/procedures	
Disposable plastic bags available for staff to transport their uniform home for laundering	
Laundry service available for commercial washing of scrubs	
Able to secure scrubs to avert potential stock loss or misuse	

### Further information

[SA Health COVID-19 information for health professionals](#)

### For more information

**Infection Control Service**  
**Communicable Disease Control Branch**  
[www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019)

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