



General Information About the Use of Medical Gloves¹

What are the important things to remember when putting on gloves?

- Avoid excessive stretching of the glove.
- Work the glove down to the base of the fingers to make sure that the glove fits comfortably. For good tactile sensitivity, the glove should neither be too tight nor too loose at the fingertips.
- Make sure the glove fits snugly across the palm and in the cuff area without being too tight.
- Check again for signs of damage to gloves.

How can I tell if a glove is OK to use?

By checking for signs of damage. Do not use the gloves if the glove or glove package shows stains, watermarks, discoloration; is moldy or musty; or the glove has white lines, holes, rips, or tears at stress points, such as folds. Do not use sterile gloves if the package has been opened or damaged.

How often do I need to change gloves?

As a general rule, you should change gloves as often as needed for the safety and comfort of your patient and yourself.

Change gloves:

- between patients.
- between procedures on the same patient if gloves become overly contaminated with blood and other body fluids or before going to a clean site after working on a contaminated site.
- if gloves are torn, cut, or punctured.
- if using sterile gloves and gloves are contaminated by touching something non-sterile.
- if gloves have come into contact with chemicals that may damage them, such as acids, alkalis, solvents, oils, disinfectants, or sterilants. Consult your glove supplier for information about what chemicals may damage gloves.

- if gloves are in prolonged contact with body fat and fluids. In these cases, you need to change them to prevent “ballooning” or swelling in the glove fingertips.

There is also a **“fatigue factor”** - the longer you wear the same pair of gloves, the less effective they may be as a barrier. You should change gloves on a regular basis during lengthy procedures.

What can I do to make sure the gloves will be an effective barrier?

As long as the glove material is intact, it will protect you and your patients. You can help avoid tears and punctures by making sure your fingernails are well trimmed, and removing all hand jewelry. The quality of gloves also depends on how they are stored and used.

Manufacturers check their gloves for leaks using a “water-leak” test. FDA inspectors also do the same test on samples of gloves. If a sample of gloves does not pass the “water-leak” test, they cannot be sold as medical gloves.

Do I need to wash my hands when using gloves?

Yes. Bacteria thrive in the warm, moist environment inside the glove and can multiply quickly. You need to wash your hands both before and after each time you put on and remove gloves to prevent disease transmission.

- Wash your hands thoroughly, using an antimicrobial handwash, or plain soap. A waterless soap substitute can be used when water is not available.
- Dry your hands thoroughly.

Repeated handwashings, especially during the dry winter months, can lead to skin irritation. Glove use may magnify this problem. Make sure your hands are clean and dry before putting on gloves. Use lotions or creams regularly when not wearing gloves.

Is it all right to use hand lotion before putting on latex gloves?

Yes, as long as the hand lotion is water-based. Check the labeling to make sure the lotion does not contain any oil. Oils, such as mineral oil, or petroleum-based products, such as Vaseline, can weaken latex, allowing the glove to tear. Just because a lotion easily washes off does not mean that it is water-based.

Should I "double glove?"

Use your own judgement or follow your organization's guidelines. Research on the effectiveness of multiple gloving is currently underway. Glove liners worn with patient examination or surgical gloves are made of materials that are resistant to cutting or tearing. These products reduce the risk of contamination during surgical and examination procedures.

No consensus has been reached, but some researchers strongly recommend double gloving surgical procedures to reduce the risk of contact with blood or body fluids if the outer glove punctures or tears.

¹ This information is an excerpt from the Glove booklet (Gloves: Information About Medical Gloves, Tillotson Healthcare Corp.) developed by the FDA and The Health Industry Manufacturers Association.

Note: All standards referenced should be reviewed for the latest active revision level.