



AAFP Personal Protective Equipment Position Statement

The American Academy of Family Physicians, which represents 134,600 members, recognizes the importance of proper personal protective equipment (PPE), especially because family physicians are the first contact for most patients within the health care system and provide care to all people, regardless of age. Family physicians are at the front line of screening and triage for COVID-19 in outpatient and inpatient settings. As such, they are essential in preventing emergency rooms and hospitals from being overwhelmed with patients seeking testing and care for a range of diseases, including COVID-19, that, in some instances, can be managed at home by the patient in consultation with his or her physician.

Health care clinicians in general, and family physicians in particular, must be able to exercise professional judgment on the need for PPE. If health care systems are unwilling or unable to provide appropriate PPE, as is their responsibility to both employees and patients, then family physicians should be allowed to provide their own. It is imperative during pandemics that health care workers have adequate protection to decrease personal harm and the spread of disease. This is especially true when limited test availability masks the true prevalence of COVID-19. Family physicians should not be required by health care systems to see patients in person when adequate PPE is not available.

If the primary care workforce becomes ill with pandemic COVID-19, the health care system will become overwhelmed and could collapse, resulting in significant harm to the population. The AAFP strongly supports the use of PPE for family physicians, based on their clinical judgment.

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