

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

How many types of personal protective equipment are there? How many do you wear? Do you know why you wear it? Do you know how to wear it? Is there some you need that you don't have?



The first step is to evaluate the hazards in your workplace. And, of course, this will apply at home, too. Are you working with chemicals? Sharp edges? Noise? Slippery surfaces? Take a look around your workspace to identify the hazards. Once you've identified the hazards, ask yourself these questions:

Question #1: Can I eliminate the hazard?

If you can eliminate the hazard because you don't really need to use it or you can replace it with something less hazardous, you may not need PPE.

Question #2: If I need to use this hazard, can I engineer out the exposure or apply work practice controls to reduce my time exposed to the hazard or make it less hazardous to me? For instance, can you enclose a noisy piece of machinery so the noise levels are not so high and you don't need to wear hearing protection?

Question #3: If I can't eliminate or reduce the hazard, what PPE do I need to wear to protect myself?

Please note: you need to wear it to have it protect you 😊

If you need help completing the hazard assessment and/or determining proper controls and/or PPE, you can talk to your supervisor.

I sincerely hope that when Questions #1 and #2 are answered, you won't need PPE, but if you do, let's talk about what is available and how you need to handle it.

In general, as an employee, your responsibility is to:

- **Properly wear PPE**
- **Attend training sessions on PPE**
- **Care for, clean and maintain PPE, and**
- **Inform your supervisor of the need to repair or replace PPE**



EYE AND FACE PROTECTION

You may need eye and face protection if you are exposed to flying particles, liquid chemicals, acids or caustic liquids, chemical gases or vapors, potentially infected material or potentially harmful light radiation.

Types of eye protection include safety glasses, goggles, welding shields, laser safety goggles and face shields. Please note that prescription corrective lenses are not safety glasses, however prescription safety glasses are available that will provide the proper protection.



HEAD PROTECTION

Head protection is required for potential exposure to head injuries, such as from objects that might fall from above; if the employee might bump their head against fixed objects, such as exposed pipes or beams; or if there is a possibility of accidental head contact with electrical hazards.

Head protection includes hard hats and helmets, which should resist penetration by objects, absorb the shock of a blow, are water-resistant and slow burning, and have clear instruction explaining proper adjustment and replacement of the suspension and headband.



FOOT AND LEG PROTECTION

Foot and leg protection should be worn if you face possible foot or leg injuries from falling or rolling objects or from crushing or penetrating materials, electrical hazards, water, etc. Foot and leg protection choices include leggings, metatarsal guards, toe guards, combination foot and shin guards and safety shoes. A special note on footwear: we don't have a general footwear requirement, but to help prevent a slip/fall injury, be sure to wear sturdy, non-slip footwear and walk from heel-to-toe, which will provide solid footing with each step.



HAND AND ARM PROTECTION

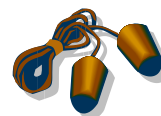
Potential hand and arm exposures include skin absorption of harmful substances, burns, bruises, cuts, punctures, fractures and amputations. Protective gear includes gloves, finger guards and arm coverings or elbow-length gloves. Gloves are available in many varieties, including leather, canvas, metal mesh, fabric and coated fabric, and chemical- and liquid-resistant. Always inspect your gloves before each use to ensure they are not torn, punctured or ineffective in any way. If they are ineffective, replace them immediately.



BODY PROTECTION

Body exposures include cuts, temperature extremes, splashes from hot substances,

potential impacts from tools, machinery and materials and hazardous chemicals. Body protection includes laboratory coats, overalls, vests, jackets, aprons, surgical gowns and full body suits.



HEARING PROTECTION

Loud noise is the main exposure to your hearing but how do you determine what's too loud? The factors to be considered in a noise exposure include the sound as measured in decibels (dB), the duration of each exposure to noise, whether employees move between work areas with different noise levels and whether noise is generated from one or multiple sources. If engineering and work practice controls don't lower the noise exposure, employees must wear hearing protection. These options include single-use earplugs, pre-formed or molded earplugs or earmuffs. (Not headphones!)



LUNG/BREATHING PROTECTION

We need to protect our lungs from hazardous exposures we may breathe. Respirators are the PPE we use to protect ourselves from breathing exposures. The choices range from particle respirators to protect us from dust and airborne particles to half-face and full-face respirators that require attachable filters, to self-contained breathing apparatuses. It is very important to store respirators in a clean place that does not expose it to any further contamination while it is not being worn; this could be a zipped plastic bag or a sealed plastic container.



All possible hazards have not been discussed here, but a representative sample was used. If you need any of this PPE, you will need more detail to choose the appropriate type. Please see your supervisor if you identify a hazard in your workplace that requires you to wear PPE to discuss your concerns with him/her.