After Work Precautions: Clothes, Shoes, and Person

The New Hampshire Nurses Association has received questions from nurses regarding what to do after work in order to further protect themselves and their families from exposure to COVID-19.

The research in the area of decontamination of healthcare workers’ uniforms is sparse, particularly with respect to the novel coronavirus (Adams & Walls, 2020). Much of the evidence relied upon for the following recommendations is based on general recommendation to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. We have put together some recommended precautions from a search of the literature and scholarly web sources:

- Follow workplace guidelines when using PPE.
- Avoid jewelry & long sleeves; keep hair pulled back and beards/facial hair covered. If wearing an N95 or similar mask requiring a solid seal, facial hair must be removed to ensure a proper fit.
- Remain mindful and focused when wearing PPE to avoid unintentional exposure (Butler, 2020).
- If scrubs are available at your work, wear your own clothes to work, use scrubs provided by your work and change before going home. (Laird, Williams, & Riley, 2018).
- If your institution does not provide scrubs, or if the existing supply is insufficient for all staff, wear your own scrubs to work. Change into a second set of clean street clothes at the end of your shift (placing your used scrubs into a plastic bag for transport home to launder).
- Keep your work shoes at work, wipe with disinfecting wipes at the end of each shift [bleach and alcohol are both effective with COVID-19]. See CDC web site link below.
- Clean your personal medical equipment (stethoscope, pen light, etc.) and mobile phone using institution provide disinfectants or alcohol-based disinfectants. (Adams & Walls, 2020).
• If possible, consider showering and washing your hair before leaving work. If not possible, do so as soon as you arrive home, before doing anything else.

• Consider your work clothes contaminated: Place them in a sealed plastic bag. Wash clothes with detergent at 60 degree C (140 Degree F) or above for a minimum of 10 minutes (Lakdawala, Shah, & Holton, 2011; Laird, Williams, & Riley, 2017).
  o Ideally, wear disposable gloves and discard them after each use [when handling possibly contaminated laundry]. When using reusable gloves, only use those gloves for cleaning and disinfecting surfaces infected with COVID-19-do not use them for any other household purpose.
  o Wash your hands immediately after using the gloves.
  o If you aren't using gloves when handling dirty laundry, be sure to thoroughly wash your hands afterwards.
  o Try to not shake the dirty laundry. Shaking the laundry carries a possibility of dispersing the virus through the air. See CDC link below.
  o Run your washing machine through a clean cycle after washing your work clothes.
  o [Note: the above laundry recommendations from the CDC were reference in their caring for individuals with COVID-19 in the home, so the guidelines are based on highly probably clothing contamination which might not be the case from routine care of non-COVID-19 patients.]

• Disinfect your home per the CDC Guidelines. See CDC web site link below.

Thanks for all you are doing on behalf of NHNA to help mitigate this challenging pandemic!
References


