

Provincial Support for Using Reusable Gowns for Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Purposes

The following information is provided by the COVID-19 Provincial IPAC and Workplace Health and Safety Working Group, a collaborative with the Provincial Infection Control Network (PICNet), the Ministry of Health, health authorities and other healthcare representatives brought together to coordinate a provincial response to COVID-19.

We support the use of reusable gowns for routine practices and additional precautions¹, if they are laundered through an approved laundry service² which has the means to provide quality control and assurance of the laundry process. As already operationalized, these reusable gowns must, at a minimum, be rated as CSA/AAMI³ Level 2 or equivalent. A Level 2 equivalent gown is defined⁴ as an unrated gown that is made with materials that have barrier properties similar or equal to those used for CSA/AAMI Level 2 gowns. Often, the limitations presented by equivalent gowns include design or construction differences (e.g., open back designs or seams without adequate fluid resistance).

Laundry service providers develop and perform the quality control processes. Part of the laundry service's quality control should include a visual inspection of the fabric to identify damaged gowns (e.g. rips, tears, holes) and a method to maintain and measure the fluid repellency of the gown. The visual inspection process may be a collaborative process between the laundry service provider and staff at the health care facilities. Without maintenance measures, gowns have a life cycle and must be withdrawn from service before their levels of fluid repellency have reduced to deem them no longer CSA/AAMI Level 2. Laundry service providers may wish to consider developing and implementing a recall process for the gowns in circulation that do not pass quality control checks. Such procedure documents should be available to end users.

Please note: While it is generally acceptable to use an unrated-equivalent gown as an alternative to a rated gown, users must understand the limitations and assess whether those limitations may result in an increased risk of exposure given the nature of the hazard(s) and/or procedures being performed⁴. Certain speciality areas may need a higher CSA/AAMI level gown due to the nature of care provided (e.g., operating room, oncology or emergency health services).

¹ Per Public Health Agency of Canada's [Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings](#) (2016), additional precautions are extra measures that are put in place when routine practices alone may not interrupt the transmission of an infectious agent. Additional precautions are implemented in addition to routine practices and are initiated both on condition/clinical presentation and on specific etiology/diagnosis

² Per Provincial Infection Control Network of British Columbia's [Appendix A: British Columbia Best Practices for Environmental Cleaning for Prevention and Control of Infections in All Healthcare Settings and Programs](#) (2016), if a facility does its own laundry, published laundry regulations shall be followed. As an example, refer to Canadian Standards Association's *Z314-18 Canadian Medical Device Reprocessing Standard*

³ CSA is the acronym for Canadian Standards Association. AAMI is the acronym for The Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation. For more information about gown classification, refer to *CSA Z314-18* and *AAMI PB70:2012* standards. For a summary table outlining the classification and intended use of gowns, refer to Appendix 1 of <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/g/2019/guidance-vhf-ontario.pdf?la=en>

⁴ Definition adapted from Interior Health's *Gown Selection Guide*. June 1, 2020. Available from <https://www.interiorhealth.ca/sites/Partners/WHSresources/Documents/Gown%20Selection%20Guide.pdf>