

Routines most vital in avoiding Ebola infection: WHO

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Meticulously following stringent routines when putting on and removing protective equipment is more important than the kind of gear health care workers use to ward off Ebola infection, the World Health Organization said Friday.

"The choice of ([protective equipment](#)) is much less important than the way it is used," said Edward Kelley, head of service delivery and safety at WHO.

Presenting updated WHO guidelines on the use of [personal protective equipment](#), or PPE, he said [health care](#) workers contracting Ebola on the job were not doing so because they made the wrong choice of gear.

"It's the way that PPE has been put on and taken off," he told reporters, stressing the importance of in-depth training and clear systems in which [health care workers](#) always have a colleague watching and guiding their dressing and undressing.

While WHO's guidelines call for full-body covering for people working with Ebola patients, they provide some leeway, for instance giving the choice between using a face shield or goggles and between wearing a gown or coveralls.

WHO's updated guidelines call for the use of a surgical mask that does not collapse against the mouth and for double gloves, preferably not made of allergy-provoking latex.

When dealing with Ebola, which in the ongoing outbreak centred in West Africa has killed some 5,000 people, protection of the eyes, nose and mouth was particularly vital, Kelley said.

He warned that removing goggles appeared to be a particularly dangerous moment, since a slight misstep in the sequence of movements could easily allow something from a contaminated goggle get on the face.

Bans on bringing electronic equipment into the treatment room was also important, he said, pointing to reports of doctors who without thinking picked up their ringing phone with a gloved hand that had just touched a patient.

WHO's guidelines on the kinds of protective equipment that are acceptable can have far-reaching consequences since the UN agency has taken the lead on procuring such gear.

Since the ongoing outbreak began in Guinea late last year, the agency has moved around one million sets of [protective gear](#) and is now buying around 500,000 sets each month, spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said.

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