CARPHA's Statement on the Use of Gloves in the Community Setting in the Context of COVID-19

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. CARPHA has noted several instances on social media and other media platforms where individuals have promoted the use of gloves (single use, reusable) by the general population while out in public, as a measure of personal protection against COVID-19.

The inappropriate use of gloves by persons in public may give the user a false sense of security; and can easily lead to the transmission of germs including the virus that causes COVID-19. This includes use of gloves while shopping/browsing for food and other items, driving and holding door handles. Prolonged use of gloves and unintentional touching of the face, eyes or mobile phone will lead to contamination; and possible transmission of the virus and other germs that may become trapped on the gloves.

Some businesses may require the use of single use, plastic gloves by customers as part of their operations. In such situations, clear directions for the use, removal and disposal of the gloves should be available and easily understood.

When a person has reason to go into the community or public, CARPHA does not recommend or promote the use of personal (single use or reusable) gloves.

While out in public, the best defence against contracting COVID-19 is to continually practise proper hand hygiene (wash hands/use hand sanitizer), maintain appropriate social distancing from others (at least 2 metres/6 feet), avoid gatherings/crowded spaces and observe measures for the use of face masks where applicable.

Where possible and available, it is best to wash hands thoroughly for at least 20 seconds with soap and running water. If not practical, it is sufficient to use an alcohol-based hand rub/hand sanitizer that contains 60% or more alcohol.

The need for the use of gloves by various categories of healthcare workers and persons caring for ill relatives at home who have COVID-19 is well defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other scientific guidance. Medical gloves (single use, latex/nitrile) are worn by healthcare workers or home care providers to help:

1. To reduce the risk of contamination of health-care workers hands with blood and other body fluids and,
2. To reduce the risk of germ dissemination to the environment, and of transmission from the health-care worker to the patient and vice versa, as well as from one patient to another ¹

Gloves are to be safely disposed after use. Gloves used while handling cases of COVID-19 at home should be placed in a bag before disposal into the waste bin.

For the most current information on what you can do to keep yourself and loved ones safe from COVID-19 please visit our website: http://carpha.org/What-We-Do/Public-Health/Novel-Coronavirus.

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¹ WHO Glove Use Information Leaflet (2009) https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/Glove_Use_Information_Leaflet.pdf