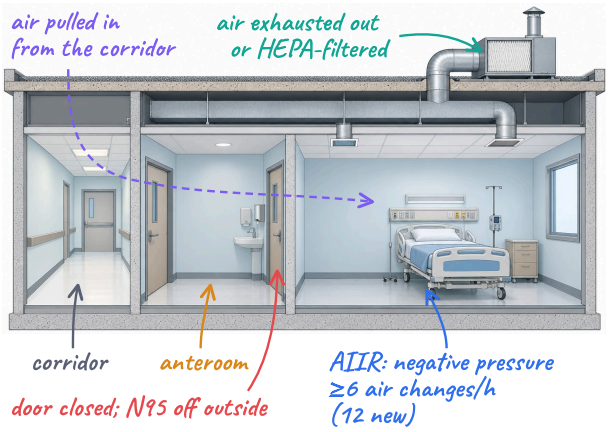
ER BASICS · ONE-PAGER

# Isolation Precautions by Organism

Standard, contact, droplet and airborne precautions by organism, PPE order, N95 fit, AIIR, cohorting, transport, neutropenic precautions and visitor teaching

19 sources + more detail
erbasics.com/sheets/isolation-by-organism.html
checked Oct 2026

## SET-UP The negative-pressure room




## 1 Four tiers at a glance

*Standard precautions apply to every client, added to any other tier.*

| PRECAUTION | SPREAD BY | STAFF WEAR | ROOM |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Standard** | Any blood or body fluid | Gloves, gown, mask, eyewear for expected exposure | Any |
| **Contact** | Touch: skin, stool, wounds, surfaces | Gown and gloves on entry | Single or cohort; own equipment |
| **Droplet** | Large droplets: cough, sneeze, talk | Surgical mask on entry | Single or cohort; ≥3 ft, curtain drawn |
| **Airborne** | Small particles that stay in the air | Fit-tested N95 before entry | AIIR, door closed |

## 2 Organisms, precautions and end points

*CDC Appendix A. Localized zoster, healthy client, covered: standard. Immunocompromised: airborne + contact until dissemination is ruled out.*

| ORGANISM | PRECAUTION | ENDS |
|---|---|---|
| **MRSA, VRE** | Contact | Facility policy; often whole stay |
| **C. difficile** | Contact; soap and water | End of illness; ≥48 h after diarrhea (IDSA/SHEA) |
| **RSV** | Contact (droplet per policy) | End of illness; longer if immunocompromised |
| **Scabies** | Contact | 24 h after effective treatment starts |
| **Influenza** | Droplet | Longer of 7 days or 24 h symptom-free |
| **Pertussis** | Droplet | 5 days of effective antibiotics |
| **Meningococcus** | Droplet | 24 h of effective antibiotics |
| **Mumps** | Droplet | 5 days after swelling begins |
| **Rubella** | Droplet | 7 days after rash onset |
| **Pulmonary TB** | Airborne | Improving, 3 negative AFB smears |
| **Measles** | Airborne | 4 days after rash; whole illness if immunocompromised |
| **Varicella, disseminated zoster** | Airborne + contact | All lesions dry and crusted |
| **COVID-19** | N95, gown, gloves, eyewear | ≥10 days; up to 20 if severe; test if immunocompromised |

## 3 PPE order (CDC)

| STEP | DONNING | DOFFING |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Gown | Gloves |
| **2** | Mask or N95, seal check | Goggles or face shield |
| **3** | Goggles or face shield | Gown, rolled inside out |
| **4** | Gloves over gown cuffs | Mask or N95 by the ties |
| **5** | — | Hand hygiene |

Clean hands first. Doff at the doorway; the N95 comes off outside, door closed. CDC also allows gown and gloves off together.

## 4 N95 and the negative-pressure room

- N95 filters ≥95% of particles only when it seals
- Medical clearance, then fit test before first use, yearly, and after weight, dental or facial change (OSHA)
- User seal check every time; a beard under the seal fails it
- AIIR: negative pressure, ≥6 air changes/h (12 new), checked daily; air exhausted out or HEPA-filtered
- No AIIR: mask the client, private room, door closed, transfer
- Measles: room stays empty up to 2 h after the client leaves

**SAFETY** The client never wears the N95; staff do. Measles: N95 even if immune. Assign immune staff to measles, mumps, varicella and zoster; non-immune pregnant staff never care for rubella.

## 5 Cohorting and transport

- Cohort only the same confirmed organism; C. diff never with MRSA or VRE
- Never room an infectious client with an immunocompromised one, or an undiagnosed rash with anyone
- Transport only when needed; tell the receiving unit first
- Contact: cover the site; transporter doffs and cleans hands, fresh PPE at arrival; clean the stretcher
- Droplet, airborne, COVID-19: surgical mask on the client; lesions covered

## 6 Neutropenic (protective) precautions

- Protects the client from us: ANC below 500 or expected to be (IDSA)
- Allogeneic stem cell transplant: positive pressure, HEPA, >12 air changes/h
- No fresh or dried flowers or plants; no rectal temperatures, exams, enemas or suppositories
- Report temperature 38 °C (100.4 °F) or higher at once

## 7 Teaching visitors

| PRECAUTION | VISITORS |
|---|---|
| **All** | Clean hands in and out; stay home if sick |
| **MRSA, VRE** | Gown and gloves per facility policy |
| **C. diff, norovirus** | Gown and gloves; soap and water |
| **Droplet** | Surgical mask; exposed household may be excused |
| **TB** | Mask or N95 per policy, taught first |
| **Measles, varicella** | Immune visitors only |
| **Neutropenic** | Screened: no fever, cough or shingles; no flowers |

**EXAM TIP** Exams test: N95 for TB, measles, varicella; surgical mask for meningitis, influenza, pertussis; MRSA in a wound is contact; soap and water for C. diff; client masked for transport; immune staff only for varicella.



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