



Tips to Stay Comfortable in Your PPE

Added safety measures have created uncomfortable clinicians across the country. In fact, the added heat from PPEs are causing dehydration, headaches, irritability, and other signs of heat stress. Heat stress is the result of the body's inability to cool down properly. A recent survey in Dentistry IQ, with 2,800 respondents, overwhelmingly confirmed this struggle is real in the dental field¹. If these symptoms sound familiar to you, try some of these "beat the heat" strategies. Be patient and find what works – it's not a one-solution problem the dental industry is facing. Here are some of the best, and sometimes fun, suggestions we have heard:

- Select breathable, light-colored fabric for gowns and surgical caps.
- Pay attention to the material of clothing worn under the gowns. Select breathable, moisture-wicking fabrics or take it one step further to try cooling vests which can be fitted with ice packs.
- Surgical caps retain heat. Try leaving your hair slightly damp under the cap to reduce the heat or choose a slightly larger size to allow heat to escape.
- Try cooling towels and cooling gel packs from the freezer. When placed on pulse points such as your neck, temples, and wrists, you can reduce your body heat quickly during a break, setting you up for the next patient with a cooler body temperature.
- Buttons on surgical caps can reduce strain on your ears from mask ear loops.
- Ear savers are another great product to reduce strain on your ears from mask loops.
- Turn down the AC.
- Small fans in each Op can help keep you cooler.
- Air purifiers that pull air in from the floor, filter it, and release it out the top provide continual cool air.
- Start out cool – trade your hot coffee for an iced coffee instead.
- Keep a big box of Otter Pops or frozen grapes in the staff freezer for a quick cool down.
- Recognize the signs of heat stress – sweating, dizziness, dry mouth, headache, frequent urination, and muscle cramps. Force a short break to take off a layer or two and hydrate.



- Buddy up – pay attention to your coworkers to recognize signs and symptoms of heat stress for each other and make a break happen. Sometimes the person suffering from heat stress doesn't recognize their own dilemma until they are in a more advanced heat stressed state.
- Try a drop of peppermint oil on the back of your neck to create a cooling sensation.
- Keep some moisturizer in the fridge to cool as you moisturize.
- Schedule frequent breaks to doff the PPE and hydrate. This may take teamwork, but it is worth it!

1. [Dentistry IQ, Hot under the collar: Practical strategies for PPE-related overheating](#) Anne Nugent Guignon, MPH, RDH, CSP June 25, 2020