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Specialist Operational Training

APPLICATION OF SPIT GUARDS



Housekeeping



100 %

Attendance

Objectives

- Identify under what conditions Spit Guards may be applied
- Identify warnings to be given prior to application of Spit Guard
- Explain the safety considerations prior to application and removal of the Spit Guard
- Watch the correct application and removal of Spit Guard
- Identify potential medical implications associated with wearing the Spit Guard
- State the correct procedure for disposal of the Spit Guard
- Understand the post-application recording procedures after use of Spit Guard

What is a Spit Guard

- Spit Guard is a single use mesh fabric guard with a polyethylene front panel which is placed over the head of the detainee who is actively attempting to spit or is spitting at officers
- The material used provides full visual, auditory and respiratory ability and does not restrict officer's ability to monitor the detainee whilst fitted
- Unrestricted eye contact helps reduce panic and avoids the escalation of a situation.
- Spit and bite guards are available as an appropriate tactical option to give officers protection from spitting and reduce the worst effects of biting

What is a Spit Guard

- The Spit Guards are designed to avoid blocking the mouth or airway through the ingestion of fluids and solids and on removal, any expelled liquids or materials are safely contained inside the mask for hygienic disposal
- The ability to monitor the detainee is imperative which is why the NPCC specifically prohibit the use or improvisation of any other device to cover a detainee's mouth e.g. blanket
- Spit Guards reduce the amount of force needed to protect officers from subjects who are spitting or intend to spit

Spit Guards

- There is significant public interest about the use of Spit Guards
- Their use must stand up to rigorous internal and external scrutiny
- All use of spit guards will be monitored by the Confidence & Standards Board
- Individual officers must be able to justify their use in line with the NDM
- Only officers that are trained and currently authorised may apply a Spit Guard
- Officers will be issued their Spit Guard once they complete initial training
- Mandatory refresher training will be needed every 365 days
- Training and authorisation will be recorded on Chronicle
- Body Worn Video and / or in-car ANPR video recording must be activated if available
- Replacement Spit Guards are available from Stores

Use of force legislation

The legal power to use a Spit Guard comes from Common Law and Section 3, Criminal Law Act 1967.

Under Common Law, any person is entitled to use reasonable force to defend themselves or others against attack. The person must have an honest held belief that they, or another, are in imminent danger and the force used must be reasonable and proportionate the threat. The force may also be used pre-emptively.

Section 3, Criminal Law Act 1967 confers the power on any person to use force to prevent crime, in the case of spitting, an assault. The use of force must be reasonable in the circumstances.

Spit Guard Application

- Application of the spit guard is a use of force. Its use should be carefully assessed using the National Decision Model (NDM)
- It is the responsibility of the officer applying the spit guard to fully justify their actions by completing the national Use of Force form on Chronicle after every use
- The following are considerations that may justify its use:
 - The subject has spat at officers
 - Where an officer perceives there is evidence of a clear and tangible threat of spitting from the subject
 - This is not an exhaustive list
- Previous instances of spitting in isolation will not provide justification for the use of a Spit Guard but combined with current behaviour may provide reasonable grounds

Spit Guard Application

- Spit Guards can only be applied on detainee's that are handcuffed to the rear
- The subject can be standing, kneeling or prone
- If practicable to do so, warn the detainee that a Spit Guard may be applied
- Consideration should be given to removing jewellery, headgear and glasses that may interfere with the application or removal of the guard
- Take a new and unused Spit Guard from it's sealed packet and apply over the head of the detainee
- Ensure the polyethylene panel is covering the mouth and nose area to catch fluids
- You do not need to hold it in place
- Activate Body Worn Video and / or in-car ANPR video recording

Duty of care whilst applied

- Detainee must be monitored at all times whilst wearing the Spit Guard
- The subject should be secured to prevent them falling whilst wearing the guard
- Check that the guard is not causing undue pressure around the subject's neck
- Give verbal reassurance once the Spit Guard has been applied:
 - Keep calm
 - Breath normally
 - Explain that the Spit Guard has been applied for their safety and for the safety of others
 - The Spit Guard will be removed if they stop spitting
- Repeat as often and as long is necessary
- Monitor and reassure throughout
- Clear, calm communication is key

- The Custody Sgt must be notified on arrival in a custody suite and a note made on the detainee's custody record

Spit Guard Removal

- The Spit Guard should be removed as soon as possible and officers should communicate with the detainee to facilitate that process
 - When the spitting threat as gone
 - When the detainee has been controlled, for instance when the detainee is in the prone position in a cell
 - When medical implications arise e.g. the detainee vomits
 - This is not an exhaustive list
- Remove the Spit Guard so any fluid is contained within the polyethylene panel
- Dispose of the Spit Guard in medical waste bins
- Record your Use of Force on Chronicle

Medical Implications

- There are several medical exemptions that would preclude the use of a Spit Guard.
- These include anyone who has vomited or having difficulty breathing because of:
 - Asthmatic attack
 - Positional asphyxia
 - Epilepsy
 - Panic Attack

Vulnerability - Mental Health

- If the subject is known to have a mental health condition such as Autism or Acute Behavioural Disorder be mindful of the long term impact or trauma as a result of application of Spit Guard and consideration should be made to follow up referrals and support
- Guidance suggests mentally unwell people who struggle violently during a Section 136 detention suffer a number of physical reactions to the use of restraint. Where such prolonged restraint is required the situation should be treated as a 'medical emergency' and the person removed to A&E for a medical assessment
- In mental health language, any use of force needs to be seen to be the 'least restrictive' thing in the circumstances. Spit Guards provide a 'least restrictive' option where other options may be chosen if Spit Guards are not available

Vulnerability - Autism

- For some people with a learning disability or Autism Spectrum Disorder spitting may not be a deliberate act
- It may be a symptom of Tourette's or Autism
- Spit Guards may increase the distress in some people with conditions such as Claustrophobia, Trauma or Autism where touching the skin can feel like a 'pain' sensation
- For these people a Spit Guard must be the last resort and advice sort before use if possible
- Speak to a mental health professional for advice and support if you suspect they have mental health disorder

Vulnerability - Autism

- Those in a situation of distress or high expressed emotion can find it even more difficult to understand what is being said to them
- They may 'shut down' limiting communication flow
- It is important that communication is kept clear and simple
- Tell people what you expect of them and what you want them to do using short simple phrases
 - e.g. 'stop spitting' vs 'you need to stop spitting at us then we'll be able to explain'
- Try not to shout but be clear and firm in your voice

Vulnerability - Autism

- Use their name at the start of each sentence so they know they are being addressed
- Allow them extra thinking time to process the information. Count to 5 in your head before speaking again
- Avoid the use of any irony, sarcasm or metaphors as these could be taken literally. E.g. we don't see eye to eye, he's a bit tied up at the moment
- Verbal Prompt: Say 'Stop Spitting'
Don't say 'no spitting' as some people don't understand the negative
- Visual Prompt : Show them the Spit Guard and say this will be used if you do not stop spitting
- Use the same principles to make it clear what needs to happen for the spit guard to be removed

Vulnerability - Children

- Whilst there is no restriction on the use of Spit Guards on children, they should only be used for people under 18 years of age in the most exceptional of circumstances where there is a significant risk
- The need to use Spit Guards during the restraint of a child may cause distress to the child and those who witness the arrest
- However, by eliminating the risk of being spat on, the need for physical restraint may be mitigated, thereby reducing the risk of physical injury to the child being detained

Spit Guard Exemptions

- Anyone who has vomited or is vomiting
- Anyone having difficulty breathing
- Anyone bleeding profusely and excessively from the nose or mouth area
- Medical Assistance should be consideration in the above cases
- Consideration should be given to the applying the spit guard after the use of CS Incapacitant Spray due to its effects on the subject
- Detainees from Sikh communities that are wearing headdress such as a turban are exempted from Spit Guard

College of Policing video

- [College of Policing Spit Guards video](#)

Spit Guards - Key Notes

- Use the NDM. It will help you make the right decision and will assist in justifying your actions
- Explain the reason for the use of the Spit Guard to the detainee
- Ensure the Spit Guard is new and undamaged
- Closely monitor the detainee at all times whilst they have the spit guard on
- Activate Body Worn Video and / or in-car ANPR video recording if available
- Record the detainee's threats to spit or spitting accordingly i.e. Use of Force form, Custody records, NPICCS & duty statements
- Maintain the dignity of detainee by ensuring spit guard is kept on only as long as necessary
- Consideration should be made on the application of the spit guard when a detainee has Religious Headwear or clothing
- Regardless of the detainees age or stature if spitting threat is shown spit guards may be used

Key Notes - Continued

- Consideration should be given to removing jewellery, headgear and glasses that may interfere with the application or removal of the guard
- Spit Guard is a one time use only and once removed should be treated as a bio hazard and disposed of accordingly
- Officers should wear nitrile gloves to do so
- Never leave the detainee unattended
- Never use on a detainee who has breathing difficulties, is vomiting or bleeding profusely
- Never allow the Spit Guard to become soaked (remove and re-apply a new spit guard)
- Never transport a detainee wearing a Spit Guard in the cell compartment of the Police Vehicle unless they are being directly monitored and supervised by an officer within the cell compartment
- Never use extra force to hold spit guard in place

Questions ?

Collect your personal issue Spit Guard before you leave

