Covid-19 Info from an infectious disease physician
(provided by a webinar done by Catchlight, INN and The Everyday Project)

You need to understand how this virus is transmitted from person to person:

1. Into the air through droplets released from the mouth. Anyone within 2 meters could be hit by a droplet or breath one in. This is how people get infected through the air.

2. Contaminated surfaces. Anytime you touch a contaminated surface, then touch your face without first washing your hands, you can be infected.

Think creatively about ways to clean your hands as often as possible while on assignment. Here is a Covid safety guide on the Everyday Projects website:
https://www.everydayprojects.org/covid19-guide-for-visual-journalists?fbclid=IwAR3awbhQ1d9AX-yIOuyHr7EGgL5NXrD_JA_k9SXDbMX7yef5UgqlHkXah5U

Droplet prevention:

Cloth face coverings do not prevent you from droplets. It doesn't filter out all of the particles. What you need to protect yourself is a mask that has some water resistance to it. Surgical masks are recommended. When you are thinking about contamination, you need to think of the mask as a contaminated surface. Don't touch your mask without washing your hands.

Here are the recommendations for precautions to take during Low, Medium and High risk assignments:

Low Risk situation:
A low risk situation is where you can be within 2 meters from other people. In this circumstance, there is no need to set your equipment down. For this, bring hand sanitizer.

Medium Risk:
A medium risk situation is when you are outdoors in a location that might be crowded. This is any assignment where you need to set down your equipment. Hand sanitizer, a mask, and a good decontamination plan when entering back into your house is recommended.

High Risk Assignment:
A high risk situation is where you will be in a close, confined space with someone who is sick or probably sick (probably sick is someone who has had a family member diagnosed). For this type of assignment, you need to have the right equipment - hand sanitizer, mask, eye covering
(goggles - you can get the virus through your eyes), and you need to have a decontamination plan.

Think about how you can disinfect when coming back home from an assignment. Decontaminate equipment before bringing it into your house. Take your shoes off before you walk in the door. Set up a ‘hot zone’ in the entryway. Nothing leaves that area without being decontaminated. It is recommended to keep cleaning supplies in that area. Nothing is allowed to enter into the house unless it has been cleaned down first. Cell phone, shoes, camera - all of this is contaminated. Another good suggestion is to take a shower as soon as you get home.

**Masks**

Fitting Masks. Anyone with facial hair in the hospital is asked not to have facial hair so the mask fits well to your face. You don't need a tight fitting mask unless you are in a hospital. You want a fit that covers your mouth and nose.

Reusable masks and how to sanitize them between uses: When reusing a mask, the biggest concern is that you are touching a mask that may be covered in virus. You can clean in between uses. If a mask is wet, it is not as effective. Important to let it dry out in between uses.

Homemade masks are helpful to make sure you aren't spreading virus around, but they don't protect you. Make sure you are keeping that 2 meter distance. Do not rely on homemade masks to keep you safe.

N95 masks are effective, but overkill. Medical professionals only use these masks when a procedure is being done where a lot of particles will be released.

Gas Mask is overkill. They might impact your assignment.

Surgical masks are what is recommended.

Avoid High Risk assignments if you can't get a mask.

**Eyes**

The virus is spread through the mucus membrane in the eyes. Protecting your eyes is really important when you are in a High Risk situation. If you are around someone who may be sick, you want to protect your eyes fully with goggles.

There is the risk of your fingers touching something that is contaminated and then touching your eyes.
Disinfecting Equipment

The best disinfectant to use is a high % ethanol spray. It evaporates quickly. Once dry, that equipment will be clean. Another thing that is effective is bleach and water that will disinfect. 70% alcohol and lens cleaner. Needs to be over 70% ethanol to be effective.


Clean equipment if you are going into another person’s clean space. Wipe down equipment before bringing it into someone else's home.

Feel comfortable picking up equipment if you haven't touched it in 4-5 days. The virus dies.

Clothing

What to do with your clothes when you get home with them: Take shoes off before you enter the house, or have a separate set of shoes that you keep in your car for assignment. Put your clothes in a hamper or washing machine when you get into the house. It is a good idea to tuck your pants into your socks when out on assignment so your pants don't drag on the ground.

Long-hair and beards. Pull your hair back into a tight bun. Think of your hair the same way you would think about clothing. It can hold infection. Droplets on hair can be in your hair, then you touch your hair and then touch your face. Taking a shower is best when getting home. A beard can be considered safe after washing it with soap and water.

Gowns

Is wearing a gown recommended when going into a hospital? It's a good idea to use one, but only really helpful if you are using it correctly.

Gloves

Gloves can be very effective if used well. You still cannot touch your face when wearing gloves. If you are wearing the same pair of gloves for an assignment, still use hand sanitizer on your gloves so as to not spread virus around. Look at some of the ebola guides for how to properly clean your gloves.

Animals

Think of animals the same way you would about your hair and clothing. Your animal might be covered with a virus.
Additional thoughts and questions:

How long is someone contagious?
If you get exposed, most people start to get sick about 5 days later. Sometimes it can be as early as 3 days and as late as 14 days. Not everyone has symptoms. If you aren't coughing, you aren't spraying it out in the air, but you can still have it in your nose. So you need to wash your hands as if you can be the person about to spread the virus.

How long does the virus shed for?
That is something that healthcare professionals are still figuring out. If you are sick, they recommend that you stay indoors for at least 7 days. You want to make sure you have no symptoms for at least 72 hours before you can leave your house.

Can someone be reinfected if they have been infected?
There is hope that there might be some immunity, but they won't know for sure for the next 4-6 months.

For journalists seeking work, what Covid story are you not seeing that you think should be shown?
Who is getting impacted by this? Look at who is being impacted the most which and shows where we are failing in society.

If you are covering a funeral, do you need to use the same protection as in the hospital?
If someone has died, they are not generating those droplets. Bigger concern is who else is attending that funeral. Assume all of the people are sick.

Suggestions for drinking and eating when working on assignment:
Use a paper bag that you put your mask into. Wash your hands after taking off the mask and after putting the mask back on. You are touching the contaminated part of the mask when taking it on and off. In order to protect yourself, you need to wash your hands after touching it.