

COVID-19 PPE: N-95 Mask Instructions

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Spectrum Health contact: **Jen Grile** *Highlight denotes new content

N-95 respirator masks are personal protective equipment used to protect the wearer from airborne particles and from liquid contaminating the face. [Please watch the N-95 instructional video.](#)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, use the following guidelines for the use of N-95 respirators:

- N-95 masks are required for patients in severe respiratory precautions during aerosol-generating procedures (BiPAP/CPAP, intubation, high flow nasal cannula, extubation, and nebulizer treatments). Other uses, detailed in PPE Guidelines
- Conduct seal check every time donning the N-95. If seal check fails, discard and obtain new one, or wear a positive air-purifying respirator (PAPR)
- Wear for multiple patient encounters
- **Discard mask at end of shift.**
- Respirators with exhalation valve are **NOT** permitted in patient care settings, unless covered by standard isolation mask.
- Do not touch the outside of your mask or pull your mask up and down over your chin or head.

IMPORTANT - Mask Conservation:

When mask needs to be removed, perform hand hygiene and place your mask in a safe storage area (example: paper bag, hooks, Tupperware box with holes, or paper box) labeled with: **First and last name, location and unit, title and date.**

Additional Information:

- **Supply chain vendors and community donations:** Our N-95 supply may look a little different due to donations but will provide the same level of protection.
- **Wearing masks over masks:** Currently, we do not recommend wearing a standard isolation mask of a cloth mask over an N-95 mask. This practice would decrease our supply of PPE necessary to care for our patients.
- **Face Shield:** If supply available, pair N-95 mask with a face shield for additional protection

Q&A:

What if I was fit tested for a certain model, style, and size N95 respirator but it is no longer available for me to use?

- If you were fit tested to a certain model, style, and size N95 respirator in 2019 that is no longer available due to the national limited availability of personal protective equipment. We recommend that you perform a seal check by following the attached instructions and video to verify that the N95 mask you have available for use fits appropriately. **Standard work:** <https://www.spectrumhealth.org/-/media/spectrumhealth/documents/covid/for-providers/covid19-standard-work-for-n95-seal-check.pdf?la=en&hash=29D4C5B8A7761FD40FDE69FDA172381B89CAC24A>
- When conducting the seal check if you are unable to get a proper seal we recommend trying another mask and if still having trouble don a positive air-purifying respirator (PAPR) before

entering room. We recommend that you contact Employee Health Services at 855.648.9706 or healthassessments@spectrumhealth.org if you have further questions about your respirator.

Can I wear a KN95 mask?

- We do not recommend the use of KN95 masks. To protect the health and safety of our team members and to demonstrate a good faith effort to follow the respiratory standard interim guidance from OSHA, and this product is not currently OSHA approved. We currently have adequate supply of Tier 1 NIOSH-certified N95s that provide the proper protection for our team members. KN95 masks are a Tier 3 product and should not be used until we have exhausted Tier 1 & Tier 2 products.

What does the Occupational Health and Safety Administration say about using expired respiratory protection equipment (N95 masks, PAPR's, etc.)?

- The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) provides interim guidance to employers during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic regarding Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR § 1910.134) and using expired equipment per the following:
- In accordance with CDC guidance for optimizing the supply of respirators, employers should prioritize the use of N95 respirators by activity type. When HCP perform or are present for aerosol-generating procedures or procedures where respiratory secretions are likely to be poorly controlled, use respirators (including N95 FFRs; other FFRs; non-disposable, elastomeric respirators; and powered, air-purifying respirators (PAPRs)) that are still within their manufacturer's recommended shelf life, if available, before using respirators that are beyond their manufacturer's recommended shelf life.
- Employers are to make a good faith effort to obtain other appropriate alternative FFRs, reusable elastomeric respirators, or PAPRs, including NIOSH-certified equipment or equipment that was previously NIOSH-certified but that has surpassed its manufacturer's recommended shelf life (in accordance with OSHA's April 3, 2020 memorandum).

What is Spectrum Health doing to assure I have the safest respiratory protection equipment available to use?

- Spectrum Health is following the guidance and strategies that have been put in place from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help optimize and conserve our respiratory protection equipment.
- Supply Chain, Infection Prevention, Accreditation/Compliance, and Employee Safety have partnered closely to clinically evaluate respiratory protection equipment that will be utilized by team members. New respiratory protection equipment has been tiered into categories to guide purchasing decisions, distribution, and education requirements, according to OSHA regulations.
- Despite the severely limited supply of respiratory protection equipment for purchase due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Spectrum Health is making a good faith effort to obtain appropriate protection to keep you safe.
- Keeping team members safe is a top priority. The national limited availability of respiratory protection equipment may result in use of recalled or expired respiratory protection equipment. Respiratory protection equipment is evaluated to ensure that it is the safest option for you to use at this time even if it is recalled or past the manufacturer's shelf life.