

COVID-19 PPE: N95 Respirator Instructions & FAQ

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During the COVID-19 pandemic, use the following guidelines for the use of N95 respirators:

- Based on updated MIOSHA rules and CDC recommendations, all team members caring for COVID-19 positive patients or in prolonged close contact with suspected cases of COVID-19 are now **required** to wear an N95 respirator or positive air purifying respirator (PAPR), where available, along with other COVID-19 related PPE. Prolonged close contact is defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.
- Additionally, beginning December 22, 2020, team members are required to wear a N95 respirator or PAPR during aerosol generating procedures for all patients, regardless of COVID-19 status. For more information, please see [N95/PAPR Use for All Aerosol Generating Procedures](#).
- If fit testing has not been completed, team members may use a **universal 3M 9205+ N95** with a proper [seal check](#) as a safe option until a fit test can be completed. If you cannot get a proper seal utilizing the seal check method, use a PAPR where available.
- Fit testing is currently available for inpatient team members through Occupational Health. In preparation for fit testing, please fill out your medical questionnaire in [Ready Set](#) as soon as possible.
- Conduct seal check every time you don the N95 respirator. If seal check fails, discard and obtain new one, or wear a PAPR with standard isolation mask (where available).
- Respirators with exhalation valve are **NOT** permitted.
- Do not touch the outside of your mask or pull your mask up and down over your chin or head.
- 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:

- **N95 Respirator Usage Guidelines:** Refer to the [N95 Toolkit](#) for description and approved usage.
- **Wearing masks over respirators:** Currently, we do not recommend wearing a standard isolation mask or a cloth mask over an N95.
- **Face Shield:** Pair N95 respirator with a face shield for additional splash protection.
- **PAPR with standard isolation mask:** Not currently available in ambulatory spaces.

FAQs for ALL TEAM MEMBERS: (Ambulatory and Inpatient specific FAQs below)

Q: What is the new requirement for N95 Required Use for Spectrum Health Team Members?

A: As of November 18, 2020, based on updated MIOSHA rules and CDC recommendations, all team members caring for COVID-19 positive patients or in prolonged close contact with suspected cases of COVID-19 are now required to wear a N95 respirator or a PAPR with standard isolation mask (where

available) along with other COVID-19 related PPE. Prolonged close contact is defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.

Additionally, beginning December 22, 2020, team members are required to wear a N95 respirator or PAPR during aerosol generating procedures for all patients, regardless of COVID-19 status. For more information, please see [N95/PAPR Use for All Aerosol Generating Procedures](#).

Q: What is considered a “suspected case of COVID-19”?

A: A person who has symptoms of COVID-19 but has not been confirmed through diagnostic testing or without a clear alternative diagnosis of their symptoms.

Q: What if we are required to wear N95 respirators but don’t have enough right now?

A: We currently have an adequate supply of N95 respirators for team members. Departments should work with their supply chain liaisons to ensure stock of all N95 respirator models. For team members that have not yet been fit tested, 3M 9205+ N95 respirators are recommended to be stocked.

Q: Where can I store my N95 respirator when not in use?

A: We recommend storing your N95 respirator in a clean paper bag, or other breathable container when stored between multiple uses.

Q: If I previously tested positive or am fully vaccinated for COVID-19, am I still required to wear a N95 respirator, eye protection, or other COVID-19 related PPE?

A: Yes. Regardless of your COVID-19 status and history, all recommended PPE must be worn when providing care for any positive or suspected COVID-19 patients.

INPATIENT SPACES

(Ambulatory team members, please see AMBULATORY FAQs below)

Q: Does this requirement apply only while in a patient or exam room?

A: An N95 respirator or PAPR with standard isolation mask must be worn when providing care for any positive or suspected COVID-19 patients, including entering an occupied patient room or treatment space for a prolonged period. A standard isolation mask may be worn when providing care for non-COVID-19 patients. In areas with large populations of positive or suspected COVID-19 patients (such as Emergency Departments or designated COVID units), team members may choose to wear a N95 or PAPR with standard isolation mask to provide adequate protection for all types of patients instead of switching back and forth to a standard isolation mask.

N95 respirators or PAPRs with standard isolation mask should be worn continuously for multiple COVID-19 patient encounters following extended use guidelines. N95 respirators or PAPRs may be removed in common areas (including, but not limited to, nurses’ stations, conference rooms, medication rooms, hallways, elevators). After removed, a standard isolation mask must be donned immediately.

Q: What team members are included in this requirement? Is it only prolonged contact?

A: Team members required to wear N95 respirators or PAPRs are those that work directly with patients suspected or confirmed of having COVID-19. Prolonged close contact is defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.

Brief and infrequent close contact of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients does not warrant the use of a N95 respirator or PAPR. A standard isolation mask alone would be appropriate.

Q: Can I re-use my N95 respirator, and for how long can it be used?

A: Your N95 respirator can be worn for an entire shift unless soiled, contaminated, or fails a seal check. Please use a new N95 respirator when starting a new shift.

Q: Where can I find instructions on how to don, doff, and seal check my N95 properly?

A: All N95 respirator and PAPR resources can be found on the [COVID-19 InSite page](#) or the [Spectrum Health COVID-19 Professional Resources](#) external site.

Q: Will ancillary staff need to get a N95 respirator each day from their home department, or at the patient room prior to entering and then keep for the remainder of the day?

A: Follow current department protocols for obtaining N95 respirators. N95 respirators or PAPRs are available on patient care units that provide care for suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients.

Q: Are we giving N95 respirators to patients' family members?

A: N95 respirators will not be supplied to patients' family members. They will be reserved for team members who are required to wear them based on their work area/practices. Family members should wear standard isolation masks, including during end of life visits.

Q: What if I have not been fit tested, fail a seal check to a 3M 9205+ N95, and there are no PAPRs available?

A: Please contact your leader for assistance in locating an available PAPR in a different department (where available) or reassignment.

Q: How many days after a COVID-19 test should we be wearing N95 respirators and full PPE? Is it different for asymptomatic vs symptomatic?

A: Follow the [Provider Guidelines for the Discontinuation of Severe Respiratory Precautions](#). N95 respirators or PAPRs are no longer required once patient has met isolation discontinuation guidelines.

Q: Do PPE Coaches need to wear N95 respirators or PAPRs?

A: N95 respirators or PAPRs with standard isolation mask are required for those that work directly with patients suspected or confirmed of having COVID-19. PPE coaches should not need to be in prolonged close contact with patients, and therefore, should not require an N95 respirator or PAPR.

Q: Who should wear a N95 respirator or PAPR during a code response for a suspected or positive COVID-19 patient?

A: Any team members within 6 feet of the patient for 15 minutes or more would require an N95 respirator or PAPR with standard isolation mask. It would be appropriate for those team members assisting from the hall (from greater than 6 feet away) to wear a standard isolation mask.

Q: If I have been previously fit tested to a PAPR, may I use a 3M 9205+ N95 respirator?

A: PAPRs are currently in short supply. If a team member previously failed fit testing and was instructed to wear a PAPR, we recommend scheduling an appointment to fit test to a N95 respirator as soon as possible. New N95 respirator models are now available. Until a fit testing appointment is available, we recommend using a 3M 9205+ N95 respirator with successful seal check.

Q: Which respirators should leaders confirm are stocked in their departments to ensure correct N95s for all teams? How should we order more N95s?

A: See the [N95 Toolkit](#), and contact your supply chain liaison to ensure adequate stock.

Q: What if I was fit tested to a N95 respirator that is no longer available?

A: If your fit tested N95 respirator is no longer available, it is appropriate to wear a 3M 9205+ N95 respirator with seal check until a new fit testing appointment can be completed to available N95 respirators.

AMBULATORY

(Inpatient team members, please see INPATIENT FAQs above)

Q: Does this requirement apply only while in a patient or exam room?

A: A N95 respirator must be worn when providing care for any positive or suspected COVID-19 patients, including entering an occupied patient room or treatment space within 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes. A standard isolation mask may be worn when providing care if less than 15 minutes or for non-COVID-19 patients.

N95 respirators should be worn continuously for multiple COVID-19 patient encounters following extended use guidelines. N95 respirators may be removed in common areas (including, but not limited to, nurses' stations, conference rooms, medication rooms, hallways, elevators). After removed, a standard isolation mask must be donned immediately.

Q: What team members are included in this requirement? Is it only prolonged contact?

A: Team members required to wear N95 respirators are those that work directly with patients suspected or confirmed of having COVID-19. Prolonged close contact is defined as within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more.

Brief and infrequent close contact of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients does not warrant the use of a N95 respirator (i.e. patient service representative, checking in patients, medical assistant in/out for vital signs/rooming, provider in/out of room for visit). A standard isolation mask would be appropriate.

Q: Does this requirement apply to outpatient areas or only inpatient spaces?

A: The use of N95s applies to all team members that have prolonged contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19, including team members in outpatient spaces. Outpatient team members are encouraged to screen all patients prior to their appointment and engage in virtual visits where possible. When suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients must enter an ambulatory space, an N95 respirator should be used by team members caring for that patient during his or her appointment when close contact within 6 feet for greater than 15 minutes is anticipated.

Q: How many days after a patient's positive COVID-19 test should we be wearing N95 respirators and full PPE? Is it different for asymptomatic vs. symptomatic?

A: Follow [Discontinuation of Positive COVID-19 Patient](#). N95 respirators are no longer required once patient has met isolation discontinuation guidelines.

Q: Which respirators should leaders confirm are stocked in their departments to ensure correct N95s for all teams? How should we order more N95s?

A: See the [N95 Toolkit](#), and contact your supply chain liaison to ensure adequate stock. Please order 3M 9205+ N95 respirators (Workday ITM-1149491) and utilize a seal check, which is a safe alternative until team members can be fit tested. **If a team member has been fit tested to an alternative N95 respirator, those will also need to be stocked.**

Q: What if I have not yet been fit tested, and fail a seal check to a 3M 9205+ N95?

A: Get fit tested as soon as possible. Brief and infrequent close contact (<15 minutes and within 6 feet) of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients does not warrant the use of a N95 respirator (i.e. patient service representative, checking in patients, medical assistant in/out for vital signs/rooming, provider in/out of room for visit). If you have not been fit tested and fail a seal check with the 3M 9205+, notify your supervisor and consider the following alternative options:

1. If you anticipate contact >15 minutes and within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive or suspected patient, ask another team member to assist.
2. If there is no other team member available to assist, wear a standard isolation mask with goggles or face shield, gown, and gloves. Attempt to keep visit as brief as possible.
3. If you anticipate contact <15 minutes or greater than 6 feet away, wear a standard isolation mask with goggles or face shield, gown, and gloves.
4. If the patient is receiving an AGP, an alternate team member wearing an N95 respirator must provide care.

Q: How do I get my team fit tested for an N95 respirator?

A: **Refer to [N-95 Respirator Fit Testing](#) for contact information and availability of fit testing.**

Q: How do I use an N95 respirator if I have not been fit tested?

A: Complete the medical questionnaire in [Ready Set](#) as soon as possible and proceed with a [seal check](#) with each donning of a N95 respirator. Review the [Donning and Doffing N95](#) video. Continue to wear face shield/eye protection with a N95 respirator/standard isolation mask.

If a team member has facial hair, review the [Team member facial hair removal FAQ](#)

Q: What if I failed fit testing for all available N95 respirators?

A: Brief and infrequent close contact (<15 minutes and within 6 feet) of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients does not warrant the use of a N95 respirator (i.e. patient service representative, checking in patients, medical assistant in/out for vital signs/rooming, provider in/out of room for visit). If you have failed fit testing for all available N95 respirators, notify your supervisor and consider the following alternative options:

1. If you anticipate contact >15 minutes and within 6 feet of a COVID-19 positive or suspected patient, ask another team member to assist.

2. If there is no other team member available to assist, wear a standard isolation mask with goggles or face shield, gown, and gloves. Attempt to keep visit as brief as possible.
3. If you anticipate contact <15 minutes or greater than 6 feet away, wear a standard isolation mask with goggles or face shield, gown, and gloves.
4. If the patient is receiving an AGP, an alternate team member wearing an N95 respirator must provide care.

Q: How long can I wear my respirator?

A: At this time, your N95 respirator can be worn for an entire shift unless soiled, contaminated, or fails a seal check. Please use a new N95 respirator when starting a new shift. If removed between patients, store your N95 respirator in a clean paper bag, or other breathable container.

*PLEASE NOTE: Due to supply constraints with N95 respirators, conservation methods such as reuse for multiple shifts may be implemented at a later date.

Reference:

MIOSHA Emergency Rules: https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98178_98455---,00.html

CDC Optimizing PPE Supplies: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/n95-other-respirators.html>