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# COVID-19: Prolonged Mask Use Self-Care Tips

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### General Information:

- When wearing masks for prolonged periods of time it is important to make sure you get plenty of fluids and practice self-care. Make sure to take a moment every hour especially with prolonged mask use to assure you are getting plenty of fluids.
- Personal protective equipment use can be tiring and uncomfortable, and team members have raised questions about potential health effects of prolonged use. Team members may experience headaches, dizziness, and the feeling of labored breathing when using N95s for periods longer than one hour and especially if longer than four hours. This is caused by a buildup of carbon dioxide within the breathing space of the N95 and can be alleviated by simply removing respirators and breathing ambient air for a few minutes. You can find additional information from the CDC [here](#).

### Injury Prevention – N-95 Mask:

- Apply Cavilon® No Sting Skin Barrier Film Wipe to the cheeks and nose to reduce mask friction
- Cleanse your face gently with pH balanced cleansers
- Do not use petrolatum jelly or mineral oil as a skin sealant
- Follow standard fit testing procedures: Prior to any fit testing and respirator use, Spectrum Health requires a medical questionnaire and review by a licensed health care provider to ensure team members do not have any underlying health conditions that may be exacerbated by respirator use. This is the first step in ensuring your safety during N95 use.
- Tips to minimize symptoms:
  - Ideally, if able to be out of patient care areas, remove the mask for at least 15 minutes every 2 hours. If this is not possible, provide some pressure relief by lifting at the sides for at least 5 minutes every 2 hours, applying gloves and washing hands before and after lifting mask. Remember to perform hand hygiene before re-donning your respirator and complete a seal check before entering any hazardous environments.
  - If this time frame isn't practical, any pressure relief is helpful

### Injury Prevention – Standard Isolation Mask:

- Wear a headband with buttons to protect ears while wearing mask.
- Wear tension relief “ear saver” strap – Now available, in limited supply for team members working in clinical settings (Workday ITM-1139220) These are reusable! Disinfect after each shift or when visibly soiled. Ear straps have been donated by local manufacturers and 3D printers. They will be available at Healthy Screening Stations. Supply Chain will continue to work with local businesses to obtain more.
- Use DuoDERM® (Workday ITM-1149375) applied behind the ears

- Apply Cavilon® No Sting Skin Barrier Film (Workday ITM-1144109). Wipe to the cheeks and nose to reduce mask friction

**Skin Injury Treatment:**

- Skin intact: Apply Cavilon™ No Sting Barrier Film Wipe (1mL) daily:
  - This product is intended to protect the skin from moisture, adhesives, and friction
  - PPE may be applied after site is completely dried
  - It will naturally shed with the skin and can be reapplied every day. If buildup of product occurs, switch to reapplying every 2-3 days

**Help Chain:**

- If injury occurs complete a [Safety Pause](#)
- Contact Employee Health Monday through Friday 6:30am-4pm and Saturday/Sunday 7a-3pm at 855.648.9706 or [healthassessments@spectrumhealth.org](mailto:healthassessments@spectrumhealth.org) to trial a different mask. Employee Health will evaluate and assess if further follow-up is needed. If after hours reach out to the Hospital Supervisor for assistance.
- Contact your Manger or Supervisor know that you have concerns with your mask or respirator.

References: [www.NPIAP.com](http://www.NPIAP.com)

[The Physiological Burden of Prolonged PPE Use on Healthcare Workers during Long Shifts | | Blogs | CDC](#)