

N95 RESPIRATORS

10.3.22 English

N95 respirators are sometimes called N95 masks, but respirators and medical or surgical masks work differently. A medical mask (such as a surgical or barrier mask) provides a cover over the nose and mouth. Its purpose is to reduce the spread of germs and droplets from the mouth and nose of the person wearing it. A well-fitting face mask may also provide some level of protection from other people's germs.



What is an N-95 Respirator?

An N95 is a respiratory protective mask designed to provide a close facial fit (seal) around the nose and mouth. When worn correctly, it filters at least 95% of very small particles, such as viruses and bacteria, from the air you breathe.



NIOSH Certified N95 respirators

- ❑ NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) examines and approves N95s for use in healthcare settings to ensure that they protect healthcare workers from specific germs contacted in the work setting.
- ❑ You can verify that N95 respirators currently used are NIOSH approved and identify NIOSH approved N95s at this URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2021-124/pdfs/2021-124.pdf>.

There are now enough NIOSH approved N95s available in the United States.

The United States experienced a significant shortage of NIOSH approved N95s early in the pandemic. By July 2021, it was determined that there were enough NIOSH approved N95s for use in healthcare facilities.

Written respiratory protection programs

If a facility requires the use of an N95 respirator to protect staff from COVID-19, then a written plan respiratory protection program (RPP) is needed. A written RPP addresses specific Oregon OSHA requirements and includes:

- Hazard Assessment that describes workplace risks, such as exposure to COVID-19
- Medical Evaluations
- Fit Testing
- Training

Oregon OSHA can help facilities create a respiratory protection program. You can call your [local OR OSHA consultant](#) for assistance.

Proper use of N95 respirators

Three Key Factors Required for a Respirator to be Effective

Correct* **Incorrect**

- ① The respirator must be put on correctly and worn during the exposure.
- ② The respirator must fit snugly against the user's face to ensure that there are no gaps between the user's skin and respirator seal.
- ③ The respirator filter must capture more than 95% of the particles from the air that passes through it.

<https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/03/16/n95-preparedness/>

All staff wearing N95 respirators should be properly trained in their use. The following steps help to make sure the N95 is a good fit and that the worker is protected from very small germs, like bacteria and viruses, such as COVID-19.

Do a seal check every time a N95 is put on

1. Press the upper part of the respirator to your face.
2. Then hold your hands over the respirator and breathe out and then breathe in.
3. Make sure there are no air leaks around the edges.



4. Here is an [OSHA Video](#) showing how to perform a seal check.

Faces should be clean shaven so the N95 makes a tight seal

- If there is facial hair or stubble, the N95 cannot form a seal to keep germs out.
- Some facial hair can be acceptable for N95 use. Images of facial styles can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/facialhairwmask11282017-508.pdf>

Donning - How to put on an N95

- Follow the directions that come with the respirator.
- Putting on a N95 is called “donning”. Before donning, clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Inspect the N95 to make sure it is not damaged.
- To don:
 1. First place the top strap on the top and back of your head. Then pull the bottom strap over and place it at the back of your neck, below your ears. For those with long hair, the bottom strap should be placed on the skin, not over the hair. Use your hands to press the top of the mask to the shape of your nose.
 2. Do a seal check to make sure air is not leaking from the outer edges of the N95. If glasses or eye protection fogs up, air is leaking and the mask is not sealed. Adjust the N95 and try again.
- This is a CDC [Infographic](#) on how to don an N95.

Doffing - How to take off an N95:

- Follow the directions that come with the respirator.
- To doff:
 1. Do not touch the front of the respirator, it is contaminated.
 2. Tilt your head forward, grab and stretch the lower strap to bring over your head.
 3. Then grab and stretch the upper strap to bring over your head.
 4. Let the mask fall forward and throw it away in the trash by only touching the straps.
 5. Clean your hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water afterward.

This is a CDC [Instructional Video](#) showing how to doff an N95.

Keep a supply of N95s

- It is best to keep a four-week supply of masks.
- Consider having at least two different styles of N95s so staff can find a comfortable option
- When ordering, think about the following:



- The number of residents in Aerosol Contact Isolation Precautions for suspected or confirmed COVID-19.
- The number of times staff go in the room to take care of each resident in Aerosol Contact Isolation.
- Staff should throw the N95 away every time they leave an Aerosol Contact Isolation room, unless special circumstances have been approved by public health.
- How many staff wear N95s as source control each day

Keep N95s accessible to staff

- Ensure that N95s are readily available so staff can quickly easily get one
- Store N95s in a clean, dry location and make sure staff know where to find them

What to do if you run out of N95s during a COVID-19 outbreak

- Contact your local public health authority

When to throw away your N95

- N95s are single use items and should be thrown in the trash after a single use.
- Once removed, an N95 should be discarded.
- When wearing an N95 for source control and not entering Aerosol Contact Isolation rooms, then a single N95 may be worn for up to one 12-hour shift. Once it is removed, it should be discarded.
- Always remove and throw away an N95 when leaving a COVID-19 cohort area.

How to store an N95

- If you wear an N95 into an Aerosol Contact Isolation room or COVID-19 cohort, you should not store your N95, it should be thrown away when you take it off.

Resources

CDC and NIOSH directions on checking for NIOSH approval

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2021-124/pdfs/2021-124.pdf>

CDC NIOSH approval website - check your respirator

<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/niosh-cel/>

CDC NPPTL Respirator Fact Sheet

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/factsheets/respsars.html>

CDC N95 and other Respirators

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

