

# PROPER USE OF RESPIRATORS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS and FIRST RESPONDERS



**LEARN HOW TO PROPERLY PUT IT ON:** 95% of airborne particles are prevented from getting through a NIOSH approved N95 respirator filter. Another 10-15% of the particles **CAN STILL** get around the outside edges of the filter where it does not perfectly fit the face. If a person has not been trained how to properly wear an N95 respirator, or received a fit-test, they may only be about 30-40% effective in keeping particles out.



**EQUALLY IMPORTANT, KNOW HOW TO PROPERLY REMOVE IT:** Even if you wore it right but then removed it wrong, you are at increased risk of cross-contamination.



**EVEN IF YOU WERE ONCE TAUGHT HOW TO WEAR ONE, GET A REFRESHER:** Since many healthcare, and especially nursing home workers do not always get an annual fit-testing and training on how to wear and remove respirators, many have forgotten how to do it. After 8 months of not needing to use one, workers have been known to forget how to put one on and remove it properly.



**RE-USING N95 RESPIRATORS SHOULD BE DONE ONLY WITH GUIDANCE BY AN EXPERT:** If a healthcare worker wears an N95 respirator in the presence of an infected person for any duration, it could be assumed that a large concentration of the virus would be collected on the external surface of the respirator. If the respirator then comes in contact with that healthcare worker's hands or another surface, the virus could live on for hours and possibly infect someone else.



**SURGICAL MASKS ARE NOT APPROVED RESPIRATORS FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS:** Contrary to word on the street, surgical masks do little to protect the person wearing them from being directly exposed to the virus.  
**FACT:** the virus takes the path of least resistance and enters in around the loose-fitting edges of the mask.



**SURGICAL MASKS CAN BE WORN BY THE PERSON ALREADY INFECTED:** If an infected person wears a surgical mask, it stops a significant amount of the virus that he/she would exhale into the air around them. Although there are still loose edges, the major amount of the droplets and respiration particles tend to follow the trajectory as they are exhaled and fly straight into the surface of the mask. Once they hit the surface almost all of them stick and cannot be shaken loose.  
**FACT:** if a surgical mask is not available for the infected person, a handkerchief or bandana **CAN** be nearly as effective.



**INFECTED PEOPLE SHOULD NOT RE-USE MASKS:** Because the COVID-19 virus can survive many hours on surfaces, it can enter the body through the eyes, nose, or even broken skin. So, an infected person breathing into a surgical mask or handkerchief for several hours has potentially deposited thousands of viral particles onto the inner surface of the mask. The mask should be disposed of properly.

Respirators are imperative to prevent the spread of COVID-19 for healthcare workers and first responders, but **WHAT IF YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO PROPERLY USE ONE?**

**REVIEW THESE TIPS TO REMAIN HEALTHY AND SAFE.**

When in doubt, confer with an occupational health and safety specialist.



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