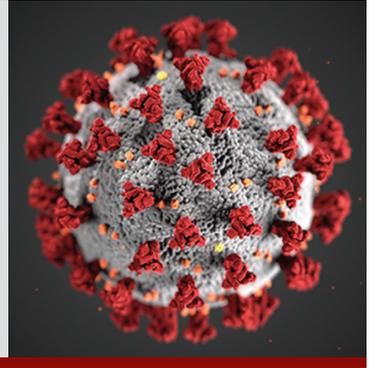


COVID-19 Prevention: Respiratory Protection for Nursing and Residential Care



This resource is for employers who provide care for the elderly or others in rest homes, skilled nursing facilities, adult family homes, assisted living facilities, and long-term care facilities. It provides basic information and weblinks about COVID-19 prevention.

This fact sheet was updated on March 30, 2021. As conditions change, please check for additional updates at www.Lni.wa.gov/CovidSafety.

Reduce the Need for Respirators

The following changes to care settings and work practices can help reduce the need for respiratory protection.

- Limit the number of workers providing direct care to clients. For example, combine tasks so workers won't be in close proximity.
- Place COVID-19 clients near each other to minimize the number of staff required to work with them.
- Locate drop-off, pick-up, and sanitizing stations for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other supplies to prevent staff from congregating and coming into close proximity with clients.
- Use curtains or other barriers to limit the spread of contamination.
- Use other required PPE (such as eye protection, gloves, and gowns), hand washing and sanitizers, standard precautions and good disinfection practices. A list of disinfectants that meet Environmental Protection Agency

criteria for use against the coronavirus is at www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-coronavirus-covid-19.

- Have clients wear masks when workers are near.

Respirators, Disposable and Surgical-style Masks, and Cloth Face Coverings

Mask use depends on the risk level determined for each work task or activity; there are five risk levels—negligible, low, medium, high, and extremely high. General criteria for each level, explanations of how masks work, and common questions and answers about masks are provided in L&I's *Which Mask for Which Task* at www.Lni.wa.gov/go/F414-168-000.

Respirators: N95s, P100s, or other respirators are required for work categorized as "high risk" and for most "extremely high-risk" work.

These types of work include:

- Assisting with procedures such as suctioning, nebulizer treatments, and breathing exercises that require sustained, close contact (i.e., within three feet) with a healthy client (i.e., not known or suspected to have COVID-19) and potentially expose workers to tiny particles and droplets expelled by the client.
- Bathing, feeding, and other care activities that require close contact with healthy clients several times a day for more than 10 minutes an hour.
- Housekeeping and other cleaning activities performed within six feet of a client known or suspected to have COVID-19.



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Respirators protect the wearer from inhaling potentially infectious particles from the air. Styles without exhalation valves can also prevent potentially infectious exhaled particles from escaping into the air.

Some respirators rely on an air-tight seal to work effectively (e.g., N95s, P100s). Others, including hooded Powered Air-Purifying Respirators (PAPRs), are loose-fitting and can accommodate facial hair.

Tight-fitting respirators must not be used until the worker passes an initial fit test for the specific model and size of respirator used.

Both tight-fitting and loose-fitting respirators used for COVID-19 prevention must have a “TC” approval number from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), or equivalent approval from a foreign agency outside the U.S., printed on the mask or in product packaging. Some N95s are also approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as surgical masks.

As an alternative to N95 respirators (and to conserve supplies), employers may provide their workers other NIOSH-approved respirators that offer an even higher level of protection, such as:

- Other filtering facepiece models that are rated N99-N100, R95-R100, or P95-P100.
- Half- or full-facepiece models with replaceable N-, R-, or P-, 95, 99, or 100 filters attached to a rubber-like (elastomeric) facepiece.
- Hood- or helmet-type PAPRs equipped with P-100 (or HEPA) filters.

Disposable and Surgical Masks: Surgical-style masks (with or without an attached face shield for eye protection), procedure masks, hobby masks, KN95s, or other disposable masks are required for work categorized as “medium risk.”

This type of work includes housekeeping, personal care, and other tasks around healthy people when workers can stay at least six feet away, except for several times a day when they must come within six feet of someone for several minutes.

Disposables provide some protection from inhaling potentially infectious particles from the air, but are less protective than respirators. They also help keep potentially infectious exhaled particles from escaping into the air.

Cloth face coverings: At a minimum, workers must wear cloth face coverings, unless they are alone or work separately from others.

Cloth face coverings protect others by providing a personal barrier to keep potentially infectious exhaled particles from escaping into the air. They also protect the wearer from larger particles (droplets) expelled by others who cough or sneeze nearby.

Cloth face coverings must cover the nose and mouth and fit comfortably and snug against the sides of the face.

When N95 Respirators Are Unavailable or Limited

When NIOSH-approved respirators are limited, employers should follow strategic guidelines by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for “conventional,” “contingency,” or “crisis” conditions.

If N95s are unavailable for high-risk activities, respirators with a NIOSH-approved equivalent (from a party outside the U.S.) may be used after users pass an initial fit test. Use of an FDA-approved surgical mask with a face shield is an option only when employers can show they have made ongoing efforts to procure supplies without success.

Find CDC strategies for when N95s are limited at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html.

Find the CDC Table 1 of respirators from other countries with approvals similar to NIOSH at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/conserving-respirator-supply.html.

Limited Re-use of N95 Respirators When Caring for COVID-19 Patients

Limited re-use of N95 respirators might become necessary. However, caution should be used.

Follow CDC guidance for limited re-use or extended use under Crisis Capacity Strategies at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html.

Look for ways to reduce surface contamination of respirators to prolong their use. For example, use a cleanable face shield (preferred) or a surgical-style mask over an N95.

Required vs. Voluntary Use of Respirators

In “negligible” to “medium-risk” situations where respirators aren’t required, employees may request to use a respirator voluntarily. Due to possible shortages of N95s, employers may want to encourage use of other types of face masks such as non-NIOSH-approved dust (hobby) masks or KN95s.

Before an employee uses a respirator voluntarily, the employer must provide them information in WAC 296-842-11005 Table 2 (see <https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-842-11005>).

Respiratory Protection Program

Before requiring respirators at work, employers must:

- Develop a written respiratory protection program and designate a program administrator. Find a sample program to customize at www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/_docs/Respirator-Program-Template%20-Guide-for-N95-Use-in-LTC-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.docx.
- Select and provide appropriate respirators at no cost to employees.
- Ensure workers are medically cleared for use, provided an initial fit-test, and trained on proper respirator use and maintenance. Note: Under the contingent situation for COVID-19, employees in health care who have been fit-tested for a particular mask will not need annual retesting for that mask.
- Instruct workers using N95s and other tight-fitting respirators to remain clean-shaven where the respirator contacts the face to ensure an air-tight seal.
- Follow other requirements outlined in the respirator rule, WAC 296-842, to ensure ongoing and reliable protection. The rule is at www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-rules/rules-by-chapter/?chapter=842.

Training and Fit Testing Resources

- Instructional video demonstrating how to conduct a respirator fit test for N95s: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxpVsm3OhLY
- Interactive training module covering the basics of N95s and other masks: <http://wisha-training.Lni.wa.gov/training/articulate/dustmasks/story.html>
- Respiratory Protection Training Kit, Module 1, for instructors about filtering facepiece respirators: www.Lni.wa.gov/safety-health/safety-training-materials/training-kits#RespProtection
- Free fit-testing services, webinars, and other resources for qualified businesses. Visit the Washington State Department of Health Fit Testing Project: www.doh.wa.gov/ForPublicHealthandHealthcareProviders/HealthcareProfessionsandFacilities/HealthcareAssociatedInfections/FitTesting

Get help

For a free safety and health consultation go to www.Lni.wa.gov/SafetyConsultants or call 1-800-423-7233 or visit a local L&I office.

Upon request, foreign language support and formats for persons with disabilities are available. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 711. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.