

RESPIRATOR FIT-TESTING & TRAINING

For all N-95 Particulate Respirators

Why do I need to wear a respirator?

- Your job duties may require you to be in contact with persons on Airborne Precautions isolation.
- Diseases requiring Airborne Precautions include Tuberculosis (TB). Tuberculosis is the most common disease requiring Airborne Precautions. TB is a communicable disease that can damage a person's lungs or other parts of the body and cause serious illness.
- Airborne diseases are spread when a person with the infectious disease coughs, sneezes or speaks, sending their germs into the air. If another person inhales air containing the infectious agent, they may become infected.
- Patients on Airborne Precautions are placed in special rooms to protect the healthcare worker.
- Wearing a NIOSH approved, N95 particulate respirator is another means to protect a caregiver from breathing the airborne germs.

Why do I need to be fit-tested to wear the respirator?

- The fit-testing is performed to provide you with the respirator that best fits your face. **ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL.**
- Fit-testing is performed before the employee is required to wear the respirator in the workplace (usually during orientation and annually thereafter. Fit testing must be repeated whenever respirator design or facial changes occur that could affect the proper fit of the respirator. Additional fit testing is necessary when a different size or make of respirator must be used; or the employee has a substantial weight gain/loss, cosmetic surgery, or facial scarring.

When do I need to wear my respirator?

- The mask is put on BEFORE entering a negative-pressure isolation room with a patient or airborne isolation.
- The mask is also worn anytime a healthcare worker is near a suspect airborne isolation patient not yet placed in isolation.
- NOTE: Patients who have or are suspect for having TB should IMMEDIATELY be placed on Airborne Precautions.

How does the respirator work?

- The respirator is designed to filter the air before it is inhaled by the person wearing the respirator.
- The fabric of the respirator has an electrostatic charge that acts to trap particles preventing filter penetration.

What can this respirator not be used for?

The primary function for this respirator is for protection against airborne diseases. It is not meant for the following exposures:

- Oxygen deficient atmospheres,
- For protection against hazardous concentrations of gases or vapors, or
- Chemical spills,
- For sandblasting, painting, asbestos removal.

Who can wear an N95 respirator?

- Personal respiratory protection should be used by healthcare workers entering Airborne Precautions rooms, treatment rooms when care is being provided to patients with infectious TB, and rooms where cough-inducing procedures are performed for patients on Airborne Precautions. This includes, but is not limited to physicians, nurses, care partners, ancillary services, security, and housekeeping staff that have been trained in the proper wearing of the mask and had a fitting.

Who should not wear an N95 respirator?

- Any health care worker that is restricted from use due to lung disease, active asthma, or other related illnesses.
- Patients and visitors are not permitted to wear the respirators. If a patient is to be transported or must remain in an open area, the patients should be given a surgical mask to wear. Visitors are to wear a surgical mask in the patient's room.
- Persons with beards cannot be fit tested due to the inability to get a good facial seal. OSHA law prohibits those individuals to wear a mask until the person is clean-shaven and fit-tested. A PAPR may need to be issued.

When should the respirator be disposed of?

End of useful service life for particulate respirators used for Airborne Precautions may be indicated if one or more of the following conditions occur:

- The respirator becomes physically damaged
- The integrity of the respirator is impaired
- Irritation occurs

For use with SARS patients, dispose of the respirator as biohazardous waste immediately after leaving the patient room.

Where should the respirator be disposed of?

Regular trash. It is not necessary to consider the respirator as contaminated medical waste, unless the respirator has been contaminated with blood or bodily fluids or has been used in providing care to a SARS patient. New respirators can be found in your clean supply closets and/or ordered through the storeroom. Ask your supervisor or unit order person for assistance if you are unable to locate a new respirator.

Where should I keep my respirator when not in use during a patient's stay?

- Keep it in a place that is easily accessible to you in an emergency type situation.
- Store it inside a plastic zip locking baggie if possible with your name on the bag. The mask can be reused for up to 6 hours of use if the integrity is maintained.

How do I put on my respirator?

1. Open the respirator by pushing slightly on both sides.
2. Shape the nose-bridge.
3. Place the respirator under the chin with the chin-flap fully open. Holding the respirator against the face, place the lower head-strap around the neck below the ears and the top head-strap above the ears.
4. This is how the respirator should appear when correctly donned.
5. Mold the nose area to the shape of the face by shaping the nose-bridge from the top to the bottom.
6. Fit-check the face-seal as follows:
Place both hands over the respirator without disturbing its position, exhale sharply, and if you detect air-leaks, re-adjust the respirator, if re-adjustment does not fix the air leak, ask the trainer for a different size of respirator.



Employee responsibilities:

- Notify supervisor of facial changes that would affect the respirator's fit such as weight loss or gain, facial surgery, braces, or dentures, and beards or mustaches below the mouth.
- Notify Employee Health/WorkMed of any permanent changes in your medical condition that would affect your ability to wear a respirator (asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease, chronic bronchitis, or heart conditions).
- Contact Employee Health/WorkMed if you experience any difficulty in breathing, angina, chest pain, nausea or symptoms associated with heart or lung problems while wearing a respirator.
- Every time a respirator is to be put on, inspect it prior to use and perform a user seal check. Visually inspect for tears, holes, creases and sturdy strap connection. Do not use if concern about adequacy of respirator.
- Verify with supervisor where to find respirators and how to obtain a respirator of your size and make if it is not available.
- Stay clean-shaven daily. Stubble will keep the respirator from sealing properly. If you decide to grow facial hair, you must contact Employee Health/WorkMed to facilitate this.

What should I do if I need to visit Employee Health/WorkMed for a follow-up evaluation?

Prior to being fitted for an N95 respirator, you will be asked to complete a Medical Evaluation form. WorkMed professionals will evaluate your responses to determine if you can wear the N95 respirator without any problems. You will be informed of any restrictions on your ability to use the respirator. If you have any health-related questions and/or respirator restrictions, you may speak with a WorkMed health professional.

What if the health care provider at Employee Health/WorkMed restricts my use of a respirator?

Inform your supervisor immediately and only use your respirator as directed by WorkMed. If you begin to feel uncomfortable while wearing your respirator, cease the activity, remove yourself from the potentially infectious environment, and remove the respirator.

What if the health care provider denies my use of a respirator?

Inform your supervisor, you will be given a PAPR for use in Airborne Precautions rooms. The PAPR also requires annual testing and teaching. If at some time your health condition subsides, call Workmed for the fit-test training.

Where can I get my annual fit test?

You will receive an email in your birth month telling you to sign up for a fit-testing session through NetLearning.

For additional information regarding respirators, call Employee Health at 4-2013 or UVA-WorkMed at 3-0075.