



Protecting Yourself from Airborne Infections

Wearing an N-95 respirator/mask

This handout tells you when you may need to wear an N-95 respirator/mask to protect your health. It also describes how to put on and remove one correctly.

For help or more information, please talk with a nurse.

Why should I wear an N-95 respirator/mask?

N-95 respirator/masks are used in different situations to protect people from airborne illnesses:

- If you are visiting someone in the hospital who has an airborne illness, you may be asked to wear an N-95 respirator/mask to protect yourself.
- As a patient, you may be asked to wear the respirator/mask for your protection when you leave your hospital room.
- Other conditions may make using the respirator/mask advisable, such as a major outbreak of flu or another airborne illness.

How does the N-95 respirator/mask protect me?

The mask filters small particles from the air that you breathe and provides a face-to-mask seal. It is the most common respirator used in the health care setting.

How do I put the mask on?



Hold the face piece to your face. Make sure it is centered and the bridge of your nose is covered.



Place the top strap around the crown of your head



Place the lower strap behind your neck **against your skin**. (You may need to move your hair away from your neck to place the strap correctly.)



Lastly, secure the nose brace to your nose. Using as many fingers as possible, press in starting at the bridge of your nose and work out along your cheekbones until the mask fits snugly against your skin.

Check to Make Sure the Mask Is Working

After putting on the mask, you must check it to make sure that it fits and is working correctly. Do these steps to check the seal on the mask:

- Cup both hands over the face piece and inhale gently. Check to see that the face piece collapses slightly and that no air leaks around it.
- Then exhale gently, still cupping your hands over the face piece. Check to see that the face piece bulges slightly and there are no air leaks around it.
- If you find a leak, adjust the face piece and nose brace until the mask stops leaking.
- If it continues to leak, ask for help from a nurse.

Questions?

Call 206-598-6122

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff is also available to help at any time.

Healthcare
Epidemiology and
Infection Control:
206-598-6122

Using the N-95 Respirator/Mask

- Do NOT adjust your N-95 face piece while you are wearing the mask. Moving the face piece during use can cause it to leak. And, touching it will bring contaminants that may be on your hands up to your face.
- If the mask becomes damaged, soiled, or wet, or if it is hard for you to breathe through it, leave the area where you have been advised to wear the mask. Once you are away from that area, remove the mask and throw it away in the waste container that is provided for this purpose. (See the instructions below for safely removing the mask.)

How do I safely remove the N-95 respirator/mask?



When you are in an area where it is safe to remove the mask:

Hold onto the mask with 1 hand to keep it in position on your face. Pull the bottom strap over your head with the other hand.



Still holding the mask in position, pull the top strap over your head with your free hand.



Remove the mask from your face. Throw it away in the waste container that is provided for this purpose.

Use the same mask only 1 time. (This type of mask is NOT meant to be used more than once.)



After discarding the mask, clean your hands with hand gel or wash them with soap and water.



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER
UW Medicine

**Healthcare Epidemiology
and Infection Control**

Box 356153

1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195
206-598-6122