

Facemasks and Respirators

About Facemasks and Respirators

Facemasks and N95 respirators are devices that may help prevent the spread of germs (viruses and bacteria) from one person to another. They are part of an infection prevention strategy that should also include frequent hand washing, respiratory/cough etiquette and social distancing.

What is a facemask?

Facemasks are loose-fitting, disposable masks; often labeled as a surgical or medical procedure masks. Facemasks help prevent the spread of germs by capturing the large droplets that may be expelled when a patient coughs, sneezes or speaks. Facemasks should be used once and then discarded in the trash.

Facemasks should be worn by healthcare personnel when:

- Providing care for patients on droplet precautions (meningitis, seasonal/H1N1 influenza, pertussis)
- When in close contact (6 feet) of an unmasked patient with a cough



Facemasks should be worn by patients when:

- Entering the hospital with symptoms of a respiratory illness (e.g., cough, fever)
- During transportation outside the patient's room for procedures or treatment

What is an N95 respirator?

An N95 respirator is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and effectively filter at least 95% of airborne particulates. These respirators should be worn only once and then discarded in the trash.

N95 respirators should be worn by healthcare personnel when:

- Providing routine care for patients on airborne precautions (TB, chickenpox, measles)
- Performing an aerosol-generating procedure (e.g. bronchoscopy, sputum induction, open nasopharyngeal suctioning, administration of aerosolized pentamidine or other medication) on a patient known or suspected to have seasonal or H1N1 influenza



Visitors should wear an N95 respirator when entering the room of patients on airborne precautions. Patients do not wear N95 respirators.

What is a PAPR?

A PAPR is a powered air-purifying respirator that uses a blower to force ambient air through a high-efficiency filter before entering the hood/head cover worn by the user and is designed to filter out at least 99% of airborne particulates.

A PAPR should be worn by healthcare personnel when:

- Unable to pass fit testing with an N95 respirator due to an inadequate seal or the presence of facial hair
- Performing a high-hazard, aerosol-generating procedure (e.g., bronchoscopy, sputum induction, pulmonary function testing, open nasopharyngeal suctioning, administration of aerosolized pentamidine or other medication) on a patient known or suspected to have an airborne transmissible disease (ATD)

