

**Focus on...**

## Using Respirators at Work

Myth or fact? Surgical masks and N95 respirators (N95s) perform the same function. It's a myth. The fact is that N95s are made to form a seal around the user's face, preventing particles from entering. Surgical masks do not, so they don't protect workers from inhaling small particles that may be toxic or cause infection. This is just one fact about respirator use that will be available through the [N95 Day web page](#).

N95s respirators are used by health care, construction and other workers. On September 5, the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) will host N95 Day, to raise awareness, provide the facts, and offer resources so that workers can make educated decisions when selecting and wearing respirators.

Health care workers are among those who may need respiratory protection at work. They have contact with patients infected with the flu, tuberculosis, or other serious infectious diseases and are at risk of infection.



Photo: Health care worker wearing an N95 respirator

The [Occupational Health Branch \(OHB\)](#) has developed resources and materials to help hospital administrators implement effective respirator programs to protect workers. They are available on OHB's [Respirator Use in Health Care Workplaces web page](#). NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NIOSH's [National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory](#) funded OHB's work in this area.

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### Resources

[N95 Day](#)

[Debunking N95 Myths](#) - webinar registration

[Respirator use in health care workplaces](#)

[Respirator Program Toolkit](#)

[Hospital respirator practices during H1N1 flu pandemic](#) - journal article abstract

[OHB](#) improves California worker health and safety through prevention activities. We gather information on job hazards, test new approaches to prevent worker injury and illness, and help make changes at the workplace.

Email [OHW@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:OHW@cdph.ca.gov) with feedback about this update or change of address.

