

Return to On-Site Work

Respirators, Masks & Face Coverings



N95

As the name indicates, N95 respirators are designed to filter 95% of both large and small airborne particles upon inhalation. The edges of the N95 respirator are intended to form a seal around the nose and mouth, achieving a very close facial fit. The ability to filter smaller particles and achieve this close fit allows N95 respirators to offer more protection than that of a surgical mask or cloth face covering. Due to a limited supply of N95s, however, their current use is primarily intended for healthcare workers.



KN95

KN95 respirators are similar to N95s in that they are also designed to filter 95% of large and small airborne particles. The difference between the two is N95s are approved under U.S. (NIOSH) respirator standards and KN95s are approved under China's standards. Due to the limited supply of N95s, the implementation of KN95 respirators have been approved for current use against COVID-19. KN95s offer multiple layers of protection, with ear loops and a nosepiece to create a good fit.



Surgical Mask

A surgical mask, also referred to as a medical mask, is a loose-fitting mask that serves as a physical barrier between the nose and mouth of the user and potential contaminants in the surrounding environment. Surgical masks are designed to help block large-particle droplets, splashes or sprays that may contain viral antigens. They may also help to reduce exposure of the user's respiratory secretions to others. Surgical masks are designed to be disposable; however, they can be lightly reused depending on frequency and duration of use.



Cotton Face Covering

Cotton face coverings can be both home-made and purchased from various distributors. These also serve as a physical barrier between the user and the surrounding environment, and primarily serve as source control. Two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric are recommended, and the distance between fibers makes a difference in effectiveness. The more tightly woven the fabric is, the more likely it will be better at preventing droplet penetration (i.e. using material with a higher thread count).



Cloth Face Covering

Cloth face coverings are also mainly intended to trap droplets released when the user talks, coughs, or sneezes (source control) and can be both home-made and purchased. However, the type and thickness of fabric used plays a major role in effectiveness.

LaRC no longer allows the use of gaiters, bandanas and crochet material as new evidence suggests these to be much less effective at preventing droplet penetration.

General Rule: Masks/Face Coverings cannot have an exhalation Valve/Vent

Source: CDC – <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/about-face-coverings.html>