

RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

Respirators, Surgical Masks and Cloth Face Masks

Respirators such as the N95 mask, are certified by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Surgical masks and cloth face coverings are not respirators and are intended to protect others from you and the potential spread of respiratory droplets that may be emitted by a sneeze, cough, forceful speech or heavy breathing. At this time, N95 respirators are critical supplies that must continue to be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders, as recommended by current CDC guidance.

CDC on Homemade Cloth Face Coverings

The CDC recommends that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain (e.g., grocery stores and pharmacies), especially in areas of significant community-based transmission. Remember, this does NOT replace the importance of social distancing.



How to Wear a Cloth Face Covering

A cloth face covering must cover the mouth and nose areas and have strings or loops that fit around the ears or around the back of the head to hold the covering in place. The top of the covering is positioned just below the eyes, over the nose and the bottom extends down to cover under the chin. The visible side of the covering should extend to cover approximately half of the individual's cheek.

Cloth face coverings should:

- fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face
- be secured with ties or ear loops
- include multiple layers of fabric
- allow for breathing without restriction
- be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape

Respirators

Millions of workers are required to wear respirators in various workplaces throughout the United States. Respirators protect workers against hazards such as insufficient oxygen environments, harmful dusts, fogs, smokes, mists, gases, vapors, biological aerosols and sprays. Compliance with the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard could avert hundreds of deaths and thousands of illnesses annually. Before an individual can use a respirator on the job, they must be medically cleared to wear it by a Health Care Professional and then they must be fit tested with the specific type, make and model of respirator they will be wearing.

