

NIHB and AAPCHO Listening Session on COVID-19 and Masking Additional Information from CDC

Tips on finding approved respirators:

- CDC's website provides a listing of [NIOSH-Approved Respirators](#). NIOSH-approved respirators can also be searched using our [Certified Equipment List](#). Supplier information is available from these lists. NIOSH only approves Respirators.
- All NIOSH-approved respirators have a TC approval number. You can verify the approval number on the [NIOSH Certified Equipment List \(CEL\)](#) or the [NIOSH Trusted-Source page](#) to determine if the respirator has been approved by NIOSH.
- Respirators have markings printed on the product to indicate they are authentic, see appropriate [KN95 markings](#).
 - Additionally, it will be marked with the NIOSH approval number (e.g., TC 84A-XXXX), please see [Required Labeling of NIOSH-Approved N95 FFRs](#). FFRs that do not contain all of this information are not NIOSH-approved and possibly counterfeit product.
- For respirators made in other countries, CDC has created the following guidances:
 - [Factors to Consider When Planning to Purchase Respirators from Another Country. Including KN95 Respirators from China](#)
 - [Understanding the Use of Imported Non-NIOSH-Approved Respirators](#).
 - NIOSH, a part of CDC, approved N95 respirators. A respirator labeled as a KN95 respirator is expected to conform to China's standard and a KF94 is expected to conform to South Korea's standard.

Tips on finding FDA-approved masks:

- Surgical masks and facemasks are cleared by the FDA. Contact the FDA for additional guidance: <https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/contact-fda> or FDA Info line: 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332).
- CDC has a page on [Types of Masks and Respirators](#)

Carbon Dioxide Information:

- For NIOSH-approved N95 respirators, studies done by Roberge et al. (2010) indicated that normal breathing did not pose a significant risk to healthcare workers over the course of less than one hour of continuous N95 use. CDC/NIOSH posted a [Science Blog](#), *The Physiological Burden of Prolonged PPE*

Use on Healthcare Workers during Long Shifts. When healthcare workers are working longer without a break while continuously wearing an N95 filtering facepiece respirators (FFR), CO₂ may accumulate in the breathing space inside of the respirator and continuously increase past the 1-hour mark, which could have a significant physiological effect on the wearer (Lim et al., 2006), including headache, altered cognitive judgement, and increased breathing frequency, among other symptoms.

- To fix the problem of breathing too much CO₂ that has built up within the respirator facepiece, a worker can move to an area where respiratory protection is unnecessary and remove the respirator. Some facilities practice oxygen supplementation during these breaks from respirator use, but there really is no need for this as the oxygen in the environment is more than enough to relieve most of the symptoms.
- A cloth mask does not provide an airtight fit across the face so the carbon dioxide completely escapes into the air through and around the sides of the cloth mask when you breathe out or talk. Carbon dioxide passes easily through any cloth mask material. In contrast, the virus that causes COVID-19 is much larger than carbon dioxide, so it does not pass as easily through a properly designed and properly worn cloth mask.
- Studies on the effects of wearing masks have shown there is no change in oxygen or carbon dioxide levels when people wear cloth and surgical masks. Although sometimes uncomfortable, masks were found to be safe even when exercising.

Proper Wearing of Masks

- CDC has compiled a guidance on fitting and wearing masks [COVID-19: Considerations for Wearing Masks | CDC](#)
- CDC's [Types of Masks and Respirators](#) page provides ways to have better fit and extra protection with cloth and disposable masks, including wearing two masks (disposable mask underneath AND cloth mask on top). Another option is to wear a mask or respirator with higher filtration efficiencies such as the ASTM F3502-21 masks or N95 respirators. Well-fitting NIOSH-approved respirators offer the highest level of protection.
- Current general recommendations related to mask use to slow the spread of COVID-19 are found at [Use Masks to Slow the Spread of COVID-19 \(cdc.gov\)](#).
- Guidance for K-12 administrators related to mask use can be found at [Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools | CDC](#).

Information provided as of August 1, 2022

- **Do not wash your N95 or put it in the oven or microwave to try to sterilize it.** Replace the N95 when the straps are stretched out and it no longer fits snugly against your face or when it becomes wet, dirty, or damaged. Throw it in the trash.
- Disposable masks, like surgical masks, should be thrown away after they're worn once.
- The CDC does not currently recommend use of face shields as a substitute for masks. They are primarily used to protect infection through eyes.