

Frequently Asked Questions for N95 Respirator Users Related to Ebola Use, Fit Testing and Training

Fit Testing of N95 Respirators is required under the Workplace Safety and Health Regulation through its reference to the CSA Standard CSA-Z94.4-02, Selection, Use, and Care of Respirators.

What's the difference between a N95 Respirator and a surgical/procedure mask?

- A surgical/procedure mask is not a respirator as it is designed to protect the nose and mouth from sprays or splashes. Protection to eyes/face can be enhanced by using face-shields. A surgical/procedure mask should be worn if in close contact to someone on droplet transmission precautions.
- An N95 NIOSH-approved respirator protects the user from inhaling airborne hazards. It can filter out 95% of airborne particles that are 0.3 microns or more in size.

What is Fit Testing and Why do I need it?

Fit testing is needed to determine if a particular size and model of respirator provides you with an acceptable fit and seal to your face. Fit testing consists of training related to donning/doffing the respirator and the fit test itself using the Portacount Machine and takes approximately 20 minutes.

Preparing for Fit Testing

- Don't eat, drink (other than water), smoke or chew gum for 20 minutes before the test.
- Must be clean shaven where the respirator touches your face to ensure a good seal.

Can I be Fit Tested if I have a Beard?

No. A beard will interfere with the ability to get a good seal. Staff must be clean shaven where the respirator seals to the face. If a staff member is required to wear the respirator during the course of his duties then he must be clean shaven.

When should fit testing be repeated?

- Every two years, or
- If there's a significant change in facial structure. This could be from weight gain/loss or broken bones, etc.

How do I put on an N95 Respirator and Know if I am getting a good seal?

- Use only the respirator and size that you have been fitted to.
- Follow the instructions on the reverse side of the page
- Ensure that you perform the seal check as indicated.

How long can a disposable N-95 respirator be used/worn?

The key consideration in how long a respirator can be worn is that it is safe and remains able to protect you from respiratory hazards. This means that it should be changed or discarded when it becomes damaged or deformed; no longer forms an effective seal to the face; becomes wet or visibly dirty; breathing through it becomes more difficult; or if it becomes contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients. This has been found to average around two hours in a healthcare setting dependent on activities being performed.

These respirators are designed to be worn for 8 hours and there is extensive experience in various settings, including very dusty settings, indicating that 8 hours of continuous or intermittent use is a safe duration from the standpoint of respirator function.

How do I remove my respirator?

- Perform hand hygiene
- Carefully remove your respirator using both the straps
- Close your eyes while removing it
- Do not touch the front of the respirator
- Dispose

Appointments for fit testing can be made through Occupational and Environmental Safety & Health