

Updated Guidance for Face Mask / Respirator Extended Use and Re-Use During Times of Crisis

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Implement extended use of facemasks

Extended use of facemasks is the practice of wearing the same facemask for repeated close contact encounters with several different patients, without removing the facemask between patient encounters.

- The facemask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- HCP must take care not to touch their facemask. If they touch or adjust their facemask they must immediately perform hand hygiene.
- HCP should leave the patient care area if they need to remove the facemask.

For additional information visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/face-masks.html>

Implement limited re-use of facemasks.

Limited re-use of facemasks is the practice of using the same facemask by one HCP for multiple encounters with different patients by removing it after each encounter. As it is unknown what the potential contribution of contact transmission is for COVID-19, care should be taken to ensure that HCP do not touch outer surfaces of the mask during care, and that mask removal and replacement be done in a careful and deliberate manner.

- The facemask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- Not all facemasks can be re-used.
 - Facemasks that fasten to the provider via ties may not be able to be undone without tearing and should be considered only for extended use, rather than re-use.
 - Facemasks with elastic ear hooks may be more suitable for re-use.
- HCP should leave patient care area if they need to remove the facemask. Facemasks should be carefully folded so that the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce contact with the outer surface during storage. The folded mask can be stored between uses in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container.

N-95 mask decontamination.

According to the CDC, vaporous hydrogen peroxide, ultraviolet germicidal irradiation, and moist heat are the most promising decontamination methods. If N-95 mask decontamination is considered, these methods do not appear to break down filtration or compromise the mask; however, many of these methods can only be used for limited times.

Healthcare providers should take the following measures prior to using a decontaminated N-95 mask:

- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the N-95 mask.
- Avoid touching the inside of the N-95 mask.
- Use a pair of clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning and performing a user seal check.
- Visually inspect the N-95 mask to determine if its integrity has been compromised.
- Check that components such as the straps, nose bridge, and nose foam material did not degrade, which can affect the quality of the fit, and seal.
- If the integrity of any part of the N-95 mask is compromised, or if a successful user seal check cannot be performed, discard the N-95 mask and try another N-95 mask.
- Users should perform a user seal check immediately after they don each N-95 mask and should not use an N-95 mask on which they cannot perform a successful user seal check.

