

# MASKS & N95 RESPIRATORS

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES ON USING MASKS AND FILTERING FACE PIECE RESPIRATORS

When protecting workers, personal protective equipment (PPE) like masks and respirators, should never be the first line of defense. Employers must consider more effective means of eliminating or reducing hazards such as avoidance, distancing and other work rules. A mask can provide some protection, however it is **NOT** a silver bullet and can provide a false sense of security. Before requiring the use of PPE, employers must assess the hazards of the workplace in order to select the proper solutions (based upon the hierarchy of controls) and equipment to protect workers.

**Masks and respirators are not the same.** Masks (Dust, Surgical, Cotton/Homemade) protect others from you and a respirator (N95) protects you from others. Effective respirators filter the air and provide a seal to the face to prevent the wearer from breathing in certain contaminants, bacteria and viruses. Masks do not provide the same protection.



Proper respirators are NIOSH stamped and have passed tests to prove efficiency and to truly protect workers, the employer must have a:

- written program (overseen by a medical doctor),
- medically clear workers,
- fit-test, and
- provide a NIOSH-approved device.

## To Put on a Device:

1. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or with hand sanitizer;
2. Cup the device with the outside in your palm;
3. If folded, pull the sides apart from the outside and let the straps hang freely;
4. Position the device under the chin and over the nose and gently pull the straps over your head;
5. Mold the device around the bridge of the nose and around the entire seal of the device;
6. Make final adjustments to the top and bottom straps to fit comfortably above and below your ears.
7. Perform a seal check by placing both hands over the device and exhale. If air leaks around your nose, adjust the nosepieces. If air leaks at the edges, adjust the straps back along the sides of your head.



# MORE TIPS FOR MASKS AND N95 RESPIRATORS

- Never use a device if its soiled or difficult to breathe through.
- Facial hair may interfere with the seal and reduce the effectiveness of the mask or respirator. Facial hair cannot interfere with the function of the exhalation valves.
- Discard devices contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, other bodily fluids, or otherwise soiled.
- Discard devices following close contact with any person with an infectious disease.
- Consider use of a cleanable face shield over a mask or respirator to keep it from becoming soiled.
- Devices may be reused multiple times as long as they are clean, dry, and properly stored. Always use in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations.
- Hang used masks or respirators in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, breathable container such as a paper bag between uses.
- Avoid crushing or deforming the device.
- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the device (if necessary for comfort or to maintain fit).
- Avoid touching the inside of the mask or respirator.
- Use a pair of clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning a mask and performing a user seal check.



For more information and resources visit:

<https://cseany.org/safety>



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CSEA has been winning the fight for safe and healthy working conditions for over 100 years, yet there is more to be done. Hazards old and new- from Asbestos to Zika- remain a threat to workers every day. CSEA will not back down from the fight and nothing is more important than saving lives and keeping workers free from injury. Your help is needed now more than ever. The life you save could be **YOUR OWN.**

