

RESPIRATOR FIT-TESTING & TRAINING

For all N-95 Particulate Respirators

Why do I need to wear a respirator?

- Your job duties may require you to enter rooms where patients are on Airborne Precautions isolation or provide care to patients on airborne precautions in outpatient or ancillary areas where the patient must remove his/her face mask.
- Your job duties may require you to perform certain high risk procedures (bronchoscopies, nebulizer treatments) to patients on Droplet Precautions.
- Diseases requiring Airborne Precautions include Tuberculosis (TB), chickenpox, measles, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Tuberculosis is the most common disease requiring Airborne Precautions. TB is a communicable disease that can damage a person's lungs or other parts of the body and cause serious illness.
- Airborne diseases are spread when a person with the infectious disease coughs, sneezes or speaks, sending their germs into the air. If another person inhales air containing the infectious agent, they may become infected.
- Patients on Airborne Precautions are placed in special rooms to protect the healthcare worker.
- Wearing a NIOSH approved, N95 particulate respirator is another means to protect a caregiver from breathing the airborne germs.

Why do I need to be fit-tested to wear the respirator?

- The fit-testing is performed to provide you with the respirator that best fits your face. One size does not fit all.
- Fit-testing is performed before the employee is required to wear the respirator in the workplace (usually during orientation) and annually thereafter. Fit testing must be repeated whenever respirator design or facial changes occur that could affect the proper fit of the respirator. Additional fit testing is necessary when a different size or make of respirator must be used; or the employee has a substantial weight gain/loss, cosmetic surgery, or facial scarring.

When do I need to wear my respirator?

- The mask is put on BEFORE entering a negative-pressure isolation room with a patient on airborne isolation.
- The mask is also worn anytime a healthcare worker is near a suspect airborne isolation patient not yet placed in isolation.
- NOTE: Patients who have or are suspect for having airborne diseases (TB, measles, chickenpox, etc.) should IMMEDIATELY be placed on Airborne Precautions.

How does the respirator work?

- The respirator is designed to filter the air before it is inhaled by the person wearing the respirator.
- The fabric of the respirator has an electrostatic charge that acts to trap particles preventing filter penetration.

What can this respirator not be used for?

The primary function for this respirator is for protection against airborne diseases. It is **not** meant for the following exposures:

- Oxygen deficient atmospheres,
- For protection against hazardous concentrations of gases or vapors, or
- Chemical spills,
- For sandblasting, painting, asbestos removal.

Who can wear an N95 respirator?

Personal respiratory protection should be used by healthcare workers entering Airborne Precautions rooms, treatment rooms when care is being provided to patients with infectious TB or other diseases spread by the airborne route, and rooms where cough-inducing procedures are performed for patients on Airborne Precautions. This includes, but is not limited to physicians, nurses, care partners, ancillary services, security, and dietary staff.

Who should not wear an N95 respirator?

- Any healthcare worker that is restricted from use by recommendation of Vanderbilt Occupational Health.
- Patients and visitors are not permitted to wear the respirators. If a patient is to be transported or must remain in an open area, the patient should be given a surgical mask to wear. Visitors are to wear a surgical mask in the patient's room.
- Persons with beards cannot be fit tested due to the inability to get a good facial seal. OSHA law prohibits those individuals to wear a mask until the person is clean-shaven and fit-tested.
- Visitors usually wear a surgical mask in the patient's room for airborne precautions.

What about reuse and disposal?

- The respirator can be reused if the patient is on airborne precautions since there is negligible risk of infection from the actual respirator.
- End of useful service life for particulate respirators used for Airborne Precautions may be indicated if one or more of the following conditions occur:
 - The respirator becomes physically damaged
 - The integrity of the respirator is impaired
 - Irritation occurs
- Store the respirator inside a plastic Ziploc™ baggie if possible.
- Also, be sure to label your respirator. The ideal labeling method is to sign your name with a Sharpie™ permanent marker somewhere on the non-latex straps.
- Dispose of the respirator in the regular trash receptacle.
- *For certain infectious diseases like SARS, do not reuse the respirator. Dispose of the respirator as biohazardous waste immediately after leaving the patient room.*
- New respirators can be found in the isolation cart, the unit "cell", clean utility room, unit-specific service center, or through Central Supply. Ask your supervisor for assistance if you are unable to locate a new respirator.

How do I put on my respirator?

1. Open the respirator by pushing slightly on both sides.
2. Shape the nose-bridge.
3. Place the respirator under the chin with the chin-flap fully open. Holding the respirator against the face, place the lower head-strap around the neck below the ears and the top head-strap above the ears.
4. This is how the respirator should appear when correctly donned.
5. Mold the nose area to the shape of the face by pinching the nose-bridge from the top to the bottom. For the Willson brand respirators, make sure that the chin-flap is open and secure around the chin area.
6. Fit-check the face-seal as follows:
Place both hands over the respirator without disturbing its position, exhale sharply, and if you detect air-leaks, re-adjust the respirator, if re-adjustment does not fix the air leak, ask the trainer for a different size of respirator.



What should I do if I need to visit the Occupational Health Clinic for a follow-up evaluation?

Prior to being fitted for an N-95 respirator, you will be asked to complete a Medical Evaluation form. Occupational Health professionals will evaluate your responses to determine if you can wear the N-95 respirator without any problems. You will be informed of any restrictions on your ability to use the respirator. If you have any health-related questions and/or respirator restrictions, you may speak with an Occupational Health professional.

- If you are attending Vanderbilt's "Hearts and Minds" employee training, simply visit the Occupational Health booth.
- If you have received training outside of "Hearts and Minds", call the Occupational Health Clinic at 6-0955 to make an appointment prior to your scheduled fit test. The office is located at 640 Medical Arts Building, 1211 21st Ave. South. Remember to take your forms with you.

What if the health care provider at Occupational Health restricts my use of a respirator?

Inform your supervisor immediately and only use your respirator as directed by Occupational Health. If you begin to feel uncomfortable while wearing your respirator, cease the activity, remove yourself from the potentially infectious environment, and remove the respirator.

What if the health care provider denies my use of a respirator?

Inform your supervisor immediately and do not participate in any activity that involves a patient on Airborne Precautions. If at some time your health condition subsides, call Vanderbilt Environmental Health and Safety for the fit-test training schedule at 2-2057.

Where can I get my annual fit test?

- Individuals should check the *N-95 Respirator web page* www.safety.vanderbilt.edu/resources/hcs_respirator.htm for regularly scheduled fit-test sessions.
- Request fit-testing for groups. Supervisors may wish to schedule fit-testing to coincide with unit competencies. Send a message to respirator@vanderbilt.edu to request scheduling for groups at least one month in advance.

For additional information regarding respirators, ask for a Medical Center Safety Officer at 2-2057.