

# Maximizing Supply of N95 Respirators and Surgical Masks

Summary of Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention\*

**Extended Use** means continuing to wear the same mask for close contact with several different patients without removing it.

→ Extended use is preferable to re-use because it involves less touching and therefore less risk of contact transmission.

	N95 Respirators	Surgical/Procedure Masks
<b>Length of use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experience in other industries indicates that respirators can function within their design specifications for <u>8 hours</u> of continuous use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>No specific guidelines provided.</i></li> </ul>
<b>During use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform hand hygiene before and after touching or adjusting the respirator (if necessary for comfort or to maintain fit).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not touch the facemask. If you touch or adjust it, perform hand hygiene.</li> <li>Leave the patient care area if you need to remove the mask.</li> </ul>
<b>When to discard</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients.</li> <li>Following close contact with any patient co-infected with an infectious disease requiring contact precautions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The facemask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.</li> </ul>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Sources:**

- [Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators: Contingency Capacity Strategies](#)
- [Recommended Guidance for Extended Use and Limited Reuse of N95 Filtering Facepiece Respirators in Healthcare Settings](#)
- [Strategies for Optimizing Supply of Facemasks](#)

**Limited re-use** is the practice of using the same mask by one health care provider for multiple encounters with different patients but removing it after each encounter.

→ Limited re-use can be used as a crisis capacity strategy, but it introduces risk of contact transmission.

	N95 Respirators	Surgical/Procedure Masks
<b>Selecting masks for re-use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>No specific guidelines provided.</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facemasks with elastic ear hooks are most suitable for re-use. Those that fasten with ties tend to tear when being removed and are thus more suitable for extended use.</li> </ul>
<b>During use</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See guidance for extended use (pg. 1).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See guidance for extended use (pg. 1).</li> </ul>
<b>During donning, doffing, and storage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning the used mask and performing a seal check. Discard gloves after the mask is donned and any adjustments are made.</li> <li>• Avoid touching the inside of the respirator. If you make contact accidentally, perform hand hygiene.</li> <li>• Label containers used for storing respirators or label the respirator itself (e.g., on the straps) to prevent sharing.</li> <li>• Hang used respirators in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, breathable container such as a paper bag. Do not allow masks to touch each other. Clean or dispose of the storage container regularly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carefully fold masks so that the surface is held inward against itself to reduce contact with surfaces when storing.</li> <li>• Store folded masks in a clean sealable paper bag or breathable container. Clean or dispose of the storage container regularly.</li> </ul>
<b>When to discard</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See guidance for extended use (pg. 1).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See guidance for extended use (pg. 1).</li> </ul>