

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions on Source Control for Correctional Facilities

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The purpose of this document is to provide staff in the correctional setting with answers to frequently asked questions regarding the use of facemasks for source control.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What does the NH Department of Public Health Services (DPHS) recommend for staff in correctional facilities?

- NH DPHS recommends that staff in correctional facilities adhere to the [universal source control](#) recommendations in order to maximally protect staff and residents.
- Staff whose job duties require any interaction with other staff and residents should wear a commercial facemask at all times while they are in the facility.
 - When available, facemasks are preferred over cloth face coverings for staff. Facemasks offer **both** source control and protection for the wearer against exposure to splashes and sprays of infectious secretions from others.
 - Facemasks are better than N95 respirators for source control.
- Staff whose job duties do not require any interaction with other staff and residents may continue to wear a cloth face covering for source control while in the facility.
- If staff must touch or adjust their facemask or cloth face covering they should perform hand hygiene immediately before and after.
- Staff should remove their facemask and put on their cloth face covering when leaving the facility at the end of their shift.
- Staff should receive job-specific training on PPE and demonstrated competency with selection and proper use of facemasks (e.g., putting on and removing without self-contamination).

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is meant by the phrase “source control”?

Source control refers to measures to prevent an individual infected with SARS-CoV-2 from transmitting infection to others. Compared with an infected person who coughs or sneezes and is not wearing a mask, an infected person wearing a facemask contaminates their environment less and is less likely to directly infect others. Symptom screening alone will not identify infectious individuals who have no symptoms or before they have symptoms. Therefore, source control offers additional protection to staff and limits the spread of COVID-19.

What are surgical masks?

Surgical masks are fluid-resistant, disposable, and loose-fitting protection devices that create a physical barrier between the mouth and nose of the wearer and the immediate environment. They are often referred to as facemasks, although not all facemasks are regulated as surgical masks.

If worn properly, a surgical mask is excellent for source control but also helps block large-particle droplets, splashes, sprays, or splatter that may contain the COVID-19 virus, keeping it from reaching your mouth and nose.

What are N95 respirators?

An N95 (or KN95) respirator is a respiratory protective device designed to achieve a very close facial fit and very efficient filtration of airborne particles. The 'N95' designation means that when subjected to careful testing, the respirator blocks at least 95 percent of very small (0.3 micron) test particles.

PROPER FACEMASK USE

When should I wear a facemask?

Everyone entering the facility to wear a facemask or cloth face covering while in the building, regardless of symptoms. This approach is consistent with the new [recommendation to the general public](#) to wear a cloth face outside of their homes and the [recommendation for healthcare personnel](#) to wear a facemask within healthcare facilities.

Should I wear a mask in public?

Yes, wear a cloth face covering in public settings even while maintaining social distancing. Wearing a cloth face covering is not a substitute for physical distancing and other prevention measures. (Source: [CDC](#))

When is a cloth face covering appropriate for staff?

Cloth face coverings may be appropriate for source control if there is no ongoing transmission of COVID-19 within the facility. During supply shortages of surgical facemasks, cloth face coverings are an acceptable alternative. Cloth face coverings should be washed daily by the facility.

Who should NOT wear a facemask or cloth covering?

Facemasks and cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing, or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

What facemask is most effective for source control?

Surgical facemasks are preferred for staff because they offer both source control and protection for the wearer against exposure to splashes and sprays of infectious material from others.

Both N95s and surgical masks protect the wearer from patient secretions; however, N95s may be less effective for source control. When someone wearing the N95 coughs, the seal of the N95 increases the pressure inside the mask, thereby forcing the air (and any infectious virus) to be ejected directly through the front of the N95 (Source: [NCBI](#)). Of note, N95s with an exhaust valve should NOT be used as source control.

When should I dispose of my surgical mask?

If your mask is damaged or soiled, or if breathing through the mask becomes difficult, you should remove the facemask, discard it safely, and replace it with a new one. To safely discard your mask, place it in a plastic bag and put it in the trash. Wash your hands after handling the used mask.

During shortages of surgical masks, it may become necessary to implement extended use of surgical masks according to the CDC [strategies for optimization of PPE](#).

What type of PPE should staff wear when caring for a resident with suspect/confirmed COVID-19?

Known or suspect COVID-19 residents should be isolated and cared for using all recommended PPE for all routine patient care activities. Follow recommendations for healthcare facilities, which require the following PPE: gloves, eye protection, gown and a facemask. Surgical facemasks should be used for routine evaluation and sample collection for COVID-19 testing. An N95 or higher-level respirator should be used for aerosol-generating procedures (e.g., sputum induction, nebulizer use, intubation).

What precautions should you take when wearing a respirator?

Not everyone is able to wear a respirator. N95 respirators are not designed for children or people with facial hair, because a proper seal cannot be achieved. People with chronic respiratory, cardiac, or other medical conditions that make breathing difficult should check with their health care provider before using an N95 respirator. Some models have exhalation valves that can make breathing out easier and help reduce heat build-up, but these N95 respirators with exhalation valves should not be used for source control. In addition, if you are not properly trained, fit tested for and accustomed to N95 use, you may be more likely to adjust your facemask throughout their shift and increase the chance for self-contamination.

Should I be fit tested for an N95?

In routine circumstances, respirators should be used as part of a respiratory protection program that provides staff with medical evaluations, training, and fit testing. However, due to the current urgency of response efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, OSHA has suspended annual fit testing. If wearing an N95 for the care of a resident with suspect or confirmed COVID-19, the wearer should perform a [seal check](#) and be properly trained on how to wear an N95.

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

How to prioritize facemasks during supply shortages?

If there are anticipated shortages of facemasks, facemasks should be prioritized for staff in direct contact with residents and then for residents with symptoms of COVID-19 (as supply allows). Cloth face coverings should NOT be worn instead of a respirator or facemask if more than source control is required.

What is extended-use of facemasks?

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

- Remove and discard the facemask if it is soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through.
- Take care not to touch the facemask.
 - If you touch or adjust their facemask they must immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Leave the resident care area if you need to remove the facemask.

KEY CONTACTS

Topic/Inquiry	Contact	Phone/Email
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ General Information▪ www.nh.gov/covid19	2-1-1 New Hampshire	1-866-444-4211 TTY: 603-634-3388
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clinical Questions	Division of Public Health Services Bureau of Infectious Disease Control	603-271-4496
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Healthcare Surge▪ Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supply Issues	DHHS Emergency Services Unit	esu@dhhs.nh.gov