

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

N95 MASK USE FOR COVID-19 COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

With the highly contagious Omicron variant now rapidly circulating through the community, the best mask protection available is an N95 (or equivalent) mask/respirator. We have been sourcing these masks in anticipation of this scenario, and a supply of N95 masks will be available for any faculty and staff member for use while on campus.

If you will be teaching or working in person on campus, orders for N95s can be made at ppesales.usask.ca. This is not a mandatory measure but is being offered to those faculty and staff who wish to wear a N95 mask while on campus.

The University continues to require all staff, students, faculty and visitors on campus to wear a single-use 3-ply mask in all indoor spaces. A good-fitting 3-ply mask is still effective when an N95 mask isn't available or chosen not to be used. Double masking, using a cloth mask as an outer layer, can help improve the fit of a 3-ply mask. Do not combine two disposable masks.

WHO CAN PURCHASE N95?

Like other types of PPE utilized throughout the pandemic, it is typically the department or unit who is responsible for funding any voluntary use programs.

For those faculty and staff who will be working on campus during the Winter term a supply of N95 (masks or respirators) will be available for purchase by units and departments in small quantities. N95 masks help protect the wearer while still providing some protection to those around.

⚠️ N95 masks with valves are not approved. KN95s (available at Costco) are acceptable, but will not be provided by USask.

WHERE CAN N95 MASKS BE PURCHASED?

USask will have masks available for departments and units to purchase through their local stores through ppesales.usask.ca. N95 masks will not be supplied to students but students are encouraged to utilize their own supply.

HOW MANY N95 MASK WILL THE AVERAGE PERSON NEED?

The average person typically will use one N95 mask per day, however, this may vary based on location and type of work being completed. To ensure a safe level of inventory is maintained, USask recommends departments and units purchase N95 masks on a weekly basis. N95 masks can be reused.

Mask Rotation

A set of four or five N95 masks can be reused each week by rotating masks each day and allowing them to dry for long enough that the virus is no longer viable (>72 hours). Masks should be hung to dry in a low traffic area, or kept in a clean, breathable container like a paper bag between uses. Make sure masks do not touch each other and do not share masks. Before each use remember to inspect and perform a user seal check. Masks should be discarded when they are contaminated, managed or it becomes hard to breathe through them.

DO N95 MASKS NEED TO BE FIT TESTED?

Based on PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) guidelines, a respirator worn in the community for protection against COVID-19 does not require a fit test. Fit testing will not be provided by USask for this purpose at this time. However, following the proper donning, doffing, and seal check procedures can help in place of a fit.

If a respirator is being utilized for a specific occupational hazard (not community transmission of COVID-19) in your workplace, fit testing is required.

If you are a USask faculty member, researcher, student, or staff member who needs to arrange a quantitative respirator fit test, please provide the following information by email to fittest@usask.ca.

- Your name and NSID
- Your supervisor's name
- A brief explanation of why you require a fit test

HOW DO I REUSE AN N95 MASK?

N95 masks can be reused so long as they continue to fit properly, the user continues to breathe easily through them, and they are not soiled/contaminated or damaged.

Steps to reuse a N95 masks:

- Before donning and after doffing, inspect the N95 masks for contamination, tears, holes, stretched/ripped elastic straps or any other damage;
- Perform hand hygiene prior to and after donning/doffing the N95 respirator, and any time the respirator is adjusted;
- Restrict touching the surface of the filtration piece and instead hold the mask by the straps;

- Perform a seal check to ensure that the mask continues to fit tightly;
- Masks can be stored for reuse in a clean, breathable, labeled container or bag, or hung by the straps in a dust-free low, traffic location until the next

Discard the N95 mask if:

- It becomes difficult to breathe through; and/or
- If it becomes contaminated, has tears, holes, or the elastic/straps are ripped/stretched or has any other damage.

⚠ Like a lab coat, masks used in a laboratory must never be worn outside the lab.

Properly putting on, removing and storing N95 masks

There are different styles of N95 mask and respirators. Regardless of the type of mask, a properly fitting mask is crucial to limiting the spread of COVID-19.

- Perform hand hygiene
- Cup the mask and bring it to your face.
- The mask should sit center on the bridge of your nose. Most masks will seal best when they are high on the bridge of the nose and fit snugly to the sides of the face.
- Adjust the straps so they are secure behind your head or ears.
- Without touching your face or eyes, use two fingers from each hand to gently mold the metal bar around the bridge of your nose. Do not pinch as this can compromise the seal.

⚠ Facial hair will impact the effectiveness of an N95 mask. To obtain the benefits these masks provide we recommend all users be clean-shaven.

HOW TO COMPLETE A USER SEAL CHECK

Perform a seal check by placing hands above and below the mask, without touching your face or eyes, and either exhale gently or inhale sharply. If you feel air escaping or coming into your mask you may need to move the mask up/down or adjust the straps. Perform another seal check and adjust until you cannot feel air moving in or out of the masks from the sides.

A successful seal, is when the mask is slightly pressurized when exhaling and slightly collapses when inhaling.

If you cannot obtain a seal from an N95 mask a 3-ply mask will provide you with acceptable protection.

⚠ Anyone wearing an N95 mask should conduct a seal check each time they put on their mask.

HOW TO DOFF (TAKE OFF) AN N95 MASK

- Perform hand hygiene;
- Bend forward slightly and carefully remove the mask from your face by touching the ties or elastic bands; and
- Start with the bottom band or tie, then remove the top.

HOW TO STORE AN N95 MASK

- Perform hand hygiene before and after donning and doffing a mask;
- Masks should be stored for reuse in a clean, breathable, labeled container or bag, or hung in a low traffic area;
- If using a reusable container or bag for storage, ensure it is disposed of or cleaned daily; and
- Store masks so that they do not touch the masks of others.



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