

FACEMASKS AND RESPIRATORS

This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Facemasks are loose-fitting, disposable masks that cover the nose and mouth. These include products labeled as surgical, dental, medical procedure, isolation, and laser masks. Facemasks help stop droplets from being spread by the person wearing them. They also keep splashes or sprays from reaching the mouth and nose of the person wearing the facemask. They are not designed to protect you against breathing in very small particles. Facemasks should be used once and then thrown away in the trash.

A respirator, for example an N95 or higher filtering facepiece respirator is designed to protect you from breathing in very small particles, which might contain viruses. These types of respirators fit tightly to the face so that most air is inhaled through the filter material. To work the best way, N95 respirators must be specially fitted for each person who wears one. This is called “Fit testing” and is usually done in a workspace where respirators are used. Like surgical masks, N95 respirators should be worn only once and then thrown away in the trash.

CDC is not recommending persons to stockpile masks or respirators at this time. If you purchase any, the manufacturer supplies important instructions with facemasks and respirators on how they are to be put on and checked to make sure they are properly positioned on the face. Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions, specific to the product you are using.

To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.