

# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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### **Guidance on the Appropriate Use of State Stockpile N95 and KN95 Masks Distributed to Schools, Towns, and Agencies**

The State of Connecticut is distributing previously stockpiled N95 and KN95 masks to various stakeholder organizations and communities in our state. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) advise that the consistent and correct use of a well-fitting mask can be very effective in preventing COVID-19 transmission, and that masks with better filtering capabilities, if worn consistently and correctly, may be better for preventing transmission in some situations.

**Fit-Testing Required for Use in Healthcare and Some Occupations.** When appropriately fit-tested, filtering facepieces like N95 respirators are designed to filter all air coming into the breathing zone of the wearer and to capture 95% of the extremely small particles present in things like respiratory aerosols. Ensuring an appropriate fit of these masks through fit testing is critical for healthcare workers treating COVID-19 infected patients and are generally considered a standard component required of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for healthcare and some other workers. Employers who require that N95 respirators be used by their employees are bound by the standards contained in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Respiratory Protection Standard (29 CFR § 1910.134).

**Fit-Testing Not Required in Other Settings.** The stockpiled N95 and KN95 masks being distributed by the State of Connecticut are not intended to be used as fit-tested PPE for healthcare workers or in other settings (although the included N95s could be used for PPE subject to the requirements above). Instead, DPH is advising that these masks should be thought of as highly effective source control masks and should be utilized by the general public as such. These masks should be used in situations where any other type of source control mask (e.g., multilayer cloth masks, surgical/procedure-style masks, etc.) would be appropriate, as advised by CDC and DPH. Some people may find high-filtering masks like N95s difficult to wear for extended periods of time, especially if they have underlying respiratory or cardiac conditions. If you are experiencing discomfort while wearing a mask of this type, you should remove it and replace it with a mask of a type that can be worn more comfortably (e.g., a surgical style or cloth mask).

**Reuse and Care.** Most masks, including N95 respirator masks, can be reused many times if stored properly when not in use. Storing a mask individually in a dry, breathable bag (like a paper or mesh fabric bag) can keep it clean between uses and prevent it from becoming damaged. If you are taking off your mask to eat or drink, you can place it somewhere safe to keep it clean, such as your pocket, purse, or paper bag rather than on the tabletop where spilled food or liquids could soil the mask. Make sure to wash or sanitize your hands after removing your mask. After eating, put the mask back on with the same side facing out. Be sure to wash or sanitize your hands again after putting your mask back on.

For more information visit the CDC website at: [Your Guide to Masks | CDC](#)