

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Use of KN95 Respirators during the COVID-19 Pandemic

KN95s Respirators are not to be used for patient care activities where respiratory droplets can potentially be aerosolized (aerosol-generating procedures)¹ during the care of patients with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. KN95 masks are not certified by NIOSH, and CDC does not have knowledge about sustained product quality for non-NIOSH approved devices.

NIOSH approves respirators in using an extensive and well documented process. KN95s do not undergo this process, however NIOSH has been conducting assessments of devices approved in other countries.² These assessments show that KN95s do not always provide the expected level of filtration, and there can be substantial variation in filtration efficiency between the devices.

Additionally, KN95s may not be able to form and maintain a tight seal on the face needed to meet filtration standards. As many KN95 devices utilize ear loops, NIOSH has conducted a limited evaluation of ear loop respirators. The respirators tested have not been able to maintain a tight seal to the face, allowing aerosolized particles to reach the mouth and nose from around of the mask.

KN95s should be used as surgical masks. A gown, gloves, and eye protection should be worn in addition while caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19. KN95s are not to be used for aerosol-generating procedures.

FDA has a list of imported, non-NIOSH approved respirators with Emergency Use Authorization (EUA).³ Non-NIOSH-approved products should only be used in crisis situations when no other NIOSH-approved N95 respirator is available. Non-NIOSH approved devices should not be used during aerosol generating procedures unless the alternative is a loose-fitting surgical mask or improvised device.

¹ CDC. Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control FAQs for COVID-19. "Which procedures are considered aerosol generating procedures in healthcare settings?": <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/infection-control-faq.html>

² CDC. NPPTL Respirator Assessments to Support the COVID-19 Response: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/respirators/testing/NonNIOSHresults.html>

³ FDA. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Emergency Use Authorizations for Medical Devices, Appendix A: Authorized Respirators: <https://www.fda.gov/media/136663/download>



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