



Special Edition
CONN-OSHA QUARTERLY

Is this a Face Mask or a Respirator?
&
Ergonomics in the Home Office

May 2020

COVID-19 has affected Connecticut's workplaces in untold ways. This special issue addresses two topics of growing concern:

- 1) How to understand the differences between facemasks and respirators and
- 2) How to set up an ergonomic workstation when working from home.

Workers have been instructed to wear "masks" for protection from small aerosols or large droplets. Workers and community members have been instructed to wear "masks" to prevent the spread of the virus (source control). There has been a great deal of confusion about which "masks" should be worn.

The Maryland Department of Labor (MOSH) factsheet included in this special edition illustrates the differences between filtering facepiece respirators (eg: N95s), surgical face masks and cloth face masks. The factsheet also reviews the steps employers should take if they require employees to use filtering facepiece respirators such as N95s. OSHA's publication [Guidance for Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#) provides helpful information on how to evaluate and control COVID risk, including when to require the use of respiratory protection and when to use other controls.

To promote "social distancing" many of Connecticut's office workers have been encouraged to work from home. As a result, these employees no longer go to offices with ergonomically designed workstations that have adjustable chairs, drop keyboard trays and monitors that can be moved to the perfect height. When workers work remotely, they may end up sitting on a couch or working at the kitchen table, hunched over a laptop screen typing for hours without interruption. Not surprisingly, these workers may find that their shoulders, backs and wrists have started to hurt. The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries materials included in this special issue provide some simple suggestions on how to set up your home work station with ergonomic principles.

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COVID-19 Facemasks vs. Respirators: Understanding the Difference



Cloth or Paper Face Mask



Surgical Face Mask



**Filtering Facepiece Respirator
(e.g. N95)**

Testing & Approval	Not tested or approved, but currently recommended by the CDC	Cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration per 21 CFR 878.4040	Evaluated, tested, and approved by NIOSH per 42 CFR Part 84
Intended Use & Purpose	To prevent transmission of the virus between people in close proximity	A fluid resistant barrier designed to protect the wearer from large droplets, splashes or sprays of bodily or other hazardous fluids.	Reduces the wearer's exposure to small particle aerosols and large droplets
Who Should Wear?	Everyone in public settings where social distancing is infeasible e.g. grocery store or pharmacy	Healthcare workers when N95 respirators are not available and patients who are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19	Healthcare workers providing care to suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases
Face Seal Fit	Loose-Fitting	Loose-Fitting	Tight-Fitting
Fit Test Required?	No*	No*	Yes**
User Seal Check Required?	No	No	Yes, each time the respirator is donned
Filtration	Not classified as a filtering face-piece respirator to protect against inhaling smaller airborne particles	Not classified as a filtering face-piece respirator to protect against inhaling smaller airborne particles	Filters ~95% of small and large airborne particles
Leakage	Leakage occurs around the edge of the mask when user inhales	Leakage occurs around the edge of the mask when user inhales	When properly fitted, minimal leakage occurs around edges of the respirator when user inhales
Use Limitations	Reusable. Launder routinely in a washing machine, depending on frequency of use. Discard if mask becomes misshapen or damaged.	Not designed for reuse. Discard after each patient encounter.	Ideally discarded after each patient encounter; limited reuse acceptable under certain conditions.

*Fit tests are not required for loose-fitting facepieces.

**OSHA has issued temporary enforcement guidance regarding filtering facepiece respirators and OSHA requirements. Additional information regarding fit testing during the COVID-19 outbreak can be found under the [March 14, 2020 memo](#) and the [April 8, 2020 memo](#).

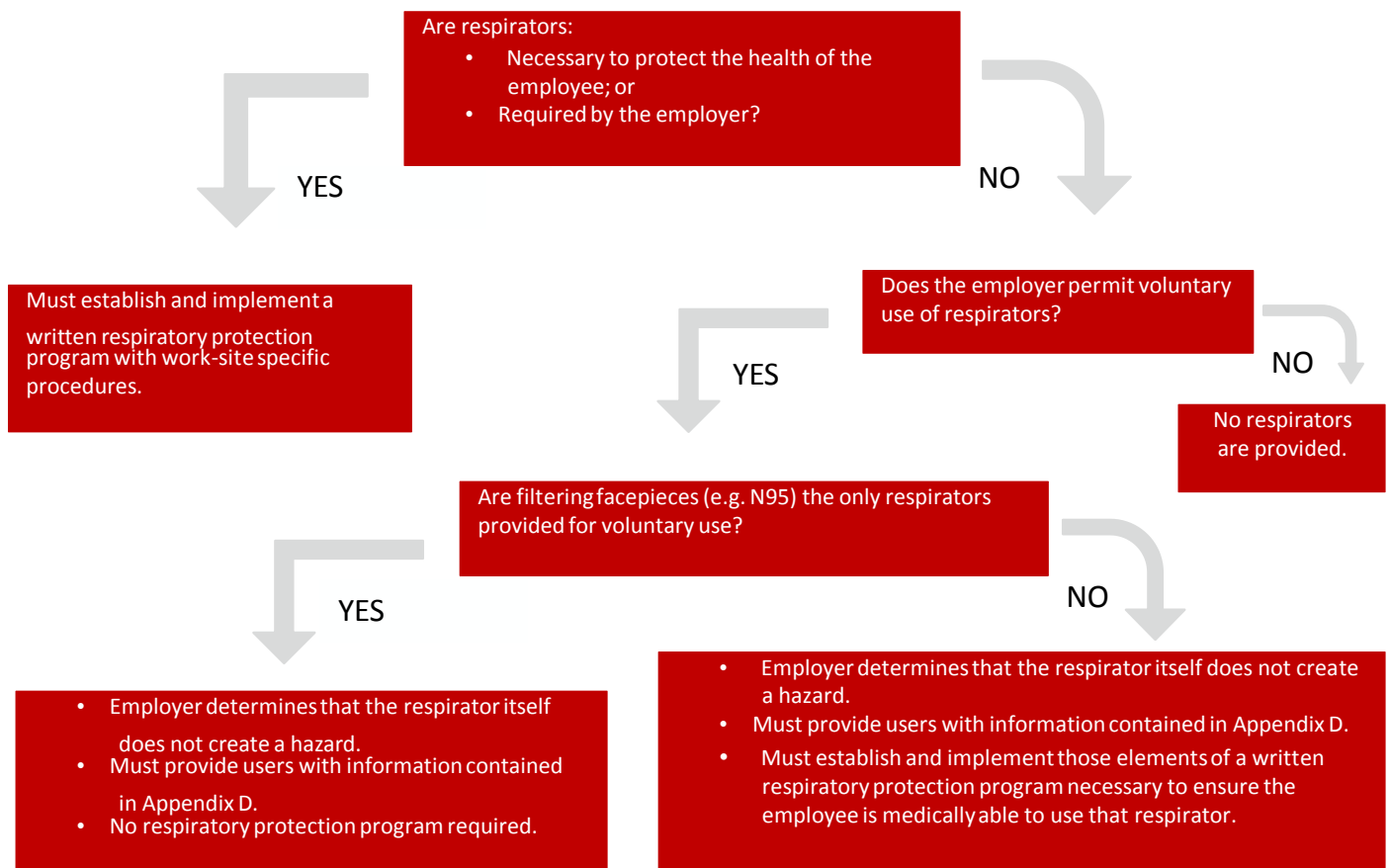
Source: <https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-infection-control/n95-respirators-and-surgical-masks-face-masks>

Credit: This factsheet was developed by the Maryland Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health (MOSH) program. It is used with their permission

The employer determines the necessary PPE required for the job task(s). The employer is responsible for payment, replacement, maintenance, cleaning, laundering, and disposal of PPE. Training should be provided to employees regarding proper use, limitations, care, and maintenance of PPE. Where respirators are provided, the following table outlines additional requirements:

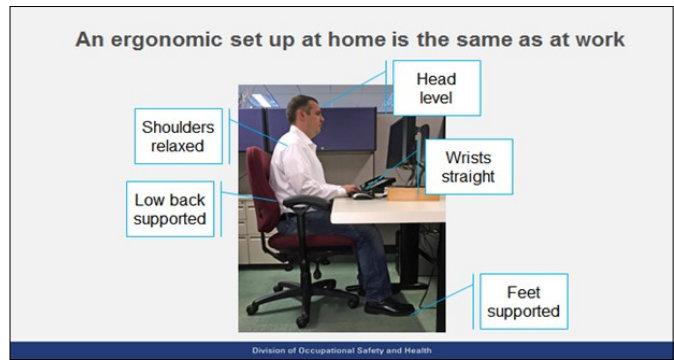
Employer Guide to Voluntary vs. Required Respirator Use

Guidelines for Employees Using Respiratory Protection		
	Filtering Facepiece Respirator (e.g. N95)	
	Required Use	Voluntary Use
Fit Testing	Yes	No
Medical Evaluation	Yes	No
Facial Hair Prohibited	Yes	No
Appendix D Provided	No	Yes
Training per 1910.134(k)	Yes	No
Cleaning, Storage & Maintenance of Respirator	Yes	Yes



Working from Home Can be a Pain...

Poor body position while teleworking may lead to neck, back and arm discomfort. Below are a few options you can use to create a comfortable and productive home work environment.



45 minutes to 1 hour at a time



Standing at a desk
All the above, plus:
Eyes at least 18" from monitor.
Good shoes or a cushioned mat for comfort.
Shift your standing posture frequently by placing one foot up on a footrest.
Keyboard and mouse are at waist level.
Make sure your monitor, keyboard and mouse are on a stable surface.



Seated at a desk
Feet supported by the floor or footrest.
Top of screen at eye level or little lower.
Screen at right angles to bright light sources to avoid glare.
Text large enough to avoid squinting or leaning forward.
Wrists kept in a straight neutral position.
If working on a laptop, consider using a detached keyboard so you may elevate your screen.



Reclining on a bed or couch
Pillows behind lower and upper back, and head to provide support.
Pillow under knees to raise the screen.
Keep your shoulders relaxed and your wrists straight.
Don't get too comfortable! Remember you're still at work.

20 to 30 minutes at a time



Rest your forearms on the table for support.
Avoid pressure on your wrists or elbows.
Add a cushion to the seat for comfort and a higher position.
Use a small cushion or rolled up towel for lower back support.
Use a different chair from another room in the house.
If working on a laptop, consider using a detached keyboard so you may raise your screen.

Healthy Habits for the Home Office
Switch between the above options frequently.
Try to stand while not using the computer (talking on the phone, working on paper work).
Take a micro break, 30-60 seconds in length, every 20-30 minutes to do some quick stretches or simple eye exercises to reduce eye strain. Take 20 seconds and look at something 20 feet away to rest your eyes.
A headset or ear buds can help with head and neck posture for online meetings or webinars.
Go for a walk on longer breaks to increase blood flow and help your muscles to relax.

Additional information and suggested corrective actions can be found by visiting the link below:

Work from Home
Ergonomics Self-Assessment

<https://lni.wa.gov/safety-health/docs/HomeOfficeErgoSelfAssesment.pdf>

Images and Text Source: Washington State Department of Labor & Industries