



The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Bulletin has been created to provide ongoing direction to healthcare providers regarding the recommended guidelines, processes and provincial supply of PPE.

N95 Respirator Supply

During the COVID-19 response, a key priority for the Saskatchewan health system is sustained access to appropriate PPE to ensure the health and safety of staff, physicians, and patients, clients and residents. Given concern over the global demand for supplies, especially N95 respirators, there is understandable concern over the supply of N95s within the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA).

The SHA and the province continue to work on many fronts to secure supply, and we are monitoring the situation closely while examining various strategies to employ in the event that supplies become limited. An overall strategy for ensuring ongoing supply of N95s during the COVID-19 pandemic has been developed, including current practice, contingency plans and triggers for when each needs to be activated. A [graphic depicting](#) the strategy is available at saskatchewan.ca/covid19-providers.

Pandemic Supply Use:

As noted in previous PPE Bulletins, part of the SHA strategy for N95s includes the use of respirators from the provincial pandemic supply. We are supplementing existing supplies with these beyond-shelf-life N95 respirators. The SHA is highly confident in the safety of these respirators for the following reasons:

- [Prior testing and certification](#) by the Centres for Disease Control (CDC)/National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH)
- International testing and guidance (e.g., [Health Canada](#) and CDC)
- Stored in optimal conditions
- Successful SHA fit testing with the respirators since early March
- Third party testing has been completed on the pandemic respirators to validate that they have successfully passed inhalation/exhalation, filtration and fluid resistance testing
- Approved exemption to Regulation 88(1)(a) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations by the Ministry of Labor Relations and Workplace Safety to use this specific stock of N95 respirators. A copy of the exemption is posted online [here](#).

When using any PPE, it is important to follow the guidelines and to do a visual inspection to ensure the integrity of the equipment. Some important notes to consider when using N95s (a [Rapid Update for N95 Use](#) has been created for easy posting and sharing):

- Follow recommended PPE Guidelines for [Droplet/Contact Plus precautions](#), including use of a face shield as eye protection.
 - o Note: Respirators from the pandemic supply were previously approved for fluid resistance; however, additional testing is needed to revalidate it. Until the testing results are received, please **ensure a face shield is used during ANY procedure that requires an N95 where there is a risk for high velocity fluid spray** (for example, surgery on patient with tuberculosis where there is concern of fluid spray).
- If you observe an issue with any item of PPE, during or after usage, report it to your supervisor, provide them with the respirator and ensure a [product issue form](#) is completed.





Regardless of the type of N95 respirator you are using, users should take the following precautionary measures prior to using the respirator in the workplace:

- Visually inspect the N95 to determine if its integrity has been compromised:
 - o Check that components such as the straps, nose bridge and nose foam material did not degrade, which can affect the quality of the fit and seal, and therefore the effectiveness, of the respirator.
- Perform a user seal check immediately after donning each respirator and do not use if you cannot perform a successful user seal check.
- If the integrity of any part of the respirator is compromised, or if a successful user seal check cannot be performed, discard the respirator and try another respirator. Ensure you submit a product issue form.

Process for Going Beyond Current PPE Recommendations

Current PPE recommendations and approved guidelines are based on provincial/national standards, current research and best practices, and have been made in collaboration with clinical experts to ensure appropriate use of existing PPE supplies. These guidelines are in place to keep everyone safe. Any adjustments to these recommendations are required to also be held to these standards.

There may be some instances in which a unit or service area need to go beyond recommendations to ensure the safety of everyone based on current circumstances and/or in cases where individuals are not able to maintain a two metre physical distance. In these cases, SHA requires that you complete an [SBAR decision-making document](#) to state your case and submit it to the OHS Hotline email at: OHS_Healthcareworkers_COVID19@saskhealthauthority.ca. This process is in place to ensure that the PPE Task Force and clinical experts can work with you to conduct a risk assessment and ensure sufficient supply of PPE is available for your unit/service area.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I've seen some staff wear their procedure mask under their chin while on break to conserve PPE. Should I be doing the same?

No. Please ensure that you are properly wearing your procedure mask. Inappropriate use can result in an increased chance of self-contamination. A [Rapid Update for Appropriate Procedure Mask Use](#) has been created to clarify the correct and incorrect way to wear a procedure mask.

2. I've seen some people wearing ear protectors with their procedure mask. Is there a way to order these?

The SHA has worked closely with local 3D printers and regular supply to receive ear protectors for staff to order through local Supply Chain. Staff are welcome to wear their own ear protectors, provided that they can be cleaned or laundered. Please refer to the [Ear Protector Rapid Update](#) for more information on correct use.

3. If I am not providing direct patient/client/resident care, do I need to wear a procedure mask while passing through a common use care area?





No. If you are only passing through a care area and are able to maintain a two-metre distance, you do not need to don a procedure mask.

4. Should I continuously use eye protection?

Continuous use of eye protection in a manner similar to continuous masking is not recommended. Use of eye protection MUST be guided by point of care risk assessment. Please continue to use eye protection using the already established decision-making structure. For Droplet/Contact Plus precautions, please refer to the updated [Eye Protection Rapid Update](#) for more information.

5. Media reports indicate that some areas may be using KN95s that do not properly filter particles. Is the SHA using these respirators?

No. The SHA is not currently, nor have we ever, put these respirators into use in the province.