

Reusing N95s, KN95s, and medical masks

Donning, Doffing and Seal Check

Fit and facial considerations:

- Facial hair- facial hair that comes between the sealing surface of the mask and the face will decrease the effectiveness of the mask because a face seal is unable to be created
- Skin care- individuals may need to adjust face washing as necessary to prevent eye or skin irritation associated with n95 mask use

Decontamination and reuse strategy:

This strategy will enable individuals to reuse masks and reduce the risk of contact transfer of pathogens from the mask to the wearer during mask reuse

- When the mask has been taken off, it can be stored in a breathable brown paper bag (lunch bag). Avoid tupperware or ziploc bags as those containers do not allow for air exchange to take place.
- To maximize this method, you will be using two masks at any given time. Label the paper bag '1' and '2'. For example if you use the mask from Bag 1 on monday, use that mask for the entire day and store it back in the bag labeled '1'. On Tuesday (or the next day you are in), you will use the mask from the bag labeled '2', and so on and so forth.
- Individuals can wear one mask each day and store it in its breathable paper bag at the end of each day.
 - with a minimum of 24 hours between each mask use, rotating the use each day between masks will provide time for pathogens on it to "die off" during storage
- All reused masks should be treated as if they are contaminated. Individuals should perform hand hygiene before donning and after touching or adjusting the mask while in use (if necessary for comfort or to maintain fit) or after doffing.

Extended, rather than intermittent, use is best practice

When done correctly, the risk of contamination from doffing and re-donning is minimal; however, the risk is even lower if you keep your mask on for several hours or during an entire shift (extended use), rather than frequently removing it and putting it back on. Consider extended use if you'll have repeated close contact with several individuals who are infected with the same respiratory pathogen. Wearing a well-fitting mask for long periods can be uncomfortable, so your decision to doff it or wear it continuously will depend on your setting and class length.

Reuse Limitations

The number of times that an mask can be reused is limited by:

- **Fit** - masks that are damaged (e.g. broken straps, broken nose piece), malformed, or are unable to provide appropriate face-seal should also be discarded and not reused.
 - Avoid continually taking on and off your mask. Each time a mask is donned or doffed, the integrity of the straps may be impacted. Repeated donning and doffing will result in the straps no longer being able to generate enough force to create a tight seal with the face. The resulting poor seal will allow unfiltered air to enter the mask and into the wearer's breathing zone.
- **Contamination and soiling**- masks that are visibly contaminated with respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids should be discarded and not reused.

Evidence from

- [CDC Guidance](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)