



Environmental Health & Safety
Boston University

COVID-19 FACE COVERING AND RESPIRATOR GUIDELINE

This document is intended to provide guidance on use of face coverings and respirators during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Please contact Environmental Health and Safety at 617-353-4094 at CRC or 617-358-7840 at BUMC with any questions. This guideline will be updated as needed.

Boston University is committed to promoting a safe campus environment for students, faculty, and staff in accordance with current state and local public safety guidelines. Face coverings must be worn at all times: in any shared spaces, in BU student residences, in all University buildings, on the BU Shuttle, and on public transportation, as well as on the street and in public spaces. Wearing a face covering does not replace the need to maintain physical distancing and observe safety protocols in shared spaces. When you are sitting in your office or an enclosed private workspace alone, you do not need to wear a face covering or disposable mask.

Cloth Face Covering

Cloth face coverings are not considered occupational Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The material is made of a multi-layered fabric and can be washed for re-use. It is intended to protect those around the user. It prevents large droplets due to coughing or sneezing from becoming aerosolized. It also helps the person wearing it from touching their face. CDC's recommendation on cloth masks and face covering is available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Some important things to know about the use and care are:

- It needs to fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face.
- It should cover the nose, chin, and mouth.
- It is secured with ties or ear loops.
- It should allow breathing without restriction; it should be removed if breathing becomes difficult.
- Can be laundered and machine dried without damage or change in shape.
- It must be inspected before wearing and discarded if damaged or change in shape or deformity.
- You must not touch your face after removing the face cover and must wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry with clean paper towels.



Surgical/Medical Masks

Surgical/medical masks are primarily used by health care providers and now, appropriate for use in the laboratory to help minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission. They protect the user from large droplets, splashes, or sprays of bodily fluids or other hazardous fluids. They also help stop the wearer from discharging large droplet aerosols from coughing, sneezing, and exhaling. They are disposable and intended for single use.

Use of Surgical/Medical Masks in the Laboratory:

- Laboratory personnel should use a surgical/medical masks when in the lab along with the routine personal protective equipment that are normally worn and used.
- The mask is disposable and intended for single use.
- The mask must be replaced when contaminated, damaged, or dirty.
- It must be removed and disposed before exiting the laboratory.
- You must not touch your face after removing the mask and must wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry with clean paper towels.
- It is important to maintain distance from other members of your laboratory, but if your work requires you to work in close proximity to another individual even for a brief period of time it is also recommended that you wear a face shield or protective eye wear such as goggles in addition to a surgical/medical mask



N95 Respirator

N95 masks are considered occupational Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) respirators. They are used by health care and front-line workers that have high risks for becoming exposed to high concentration of infectious aerosols. Users must initially pass a medical clearance and undergo respiratory fit testing successfully before they can use them.

Some important things to remember about the use of N95 respirators:

- N95s are considered PPE and are evaluated and tested by NIOSH.
- The respiratory can be reused and is constructed of filters that may block very small airborne particulates.
- Individuals authorized for use must be enrolled in BU's Respiratory Protection Program. Contact EHS for more information.
- Authorized users must be trained appropriately on their use and care; putting on; and taking off.
- You must not touch your face after removing the respirator and must wash your hands with soap and warm water and dry with clean paper towels.



Masks with Valves

There are some type of masks and respirators that have valves on them. This is a plastic piece embedded in the fabric and functions as a one-way valve. It closes when you breath in so the air is filtered through the fabric and the air you exhale goes out through the valve creating an opening for the non-filtered exhaled air to leave the mask. This could potentially spread contamination if the person is sick from COVID-19.

MASKS OR RESPIRATORS THAT HAVE VALVES MUST NEVER BE USED TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19.

