

Understanding the Difference



Surgical Mask



N95 Respirator



Elastomeric Half Facepiece Respirator

Testing and Approval

Cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Evaluated, tested, and approved by NIOSH as per the requirements in 42 CFR Part 84*

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Intended Use and Purpose

Fluid resistant and provides the wearer protection against large droplets, splashes, or sprays of bodily or other hazardous fluids. Protects the patient from the wearer's respiratory emissions.

Reduces wearer's exposure to particles including small particle aerosols and large droplets (**only non-oil aerosols**)

Reusable device made of synthetic or rubber material

Face Seal Fit

Loose-fitting

Tight-fitting

Tight-fitting

Fit Testing Requirement

No

Yes

Yes

Designed for Reuse

No

No

Yes

User Seal Check

No

Yes. Required each time the respirator is donned (put on)

Yes. Required each time the respirator is donned (put on)

Filtration

Does NOT provide the wearer with a reliable level of protection from inhaling smaller airborne particles and is not considered respiratory protection

Filters out at least 95% of airborne particles including large and small particles

May be equipped with filters that block 95%, 99%, or 100% of very small particulates. Also may be equipped to protect against vapors/gases.

Leakage

Leakage occurs around the edge of the mask when user inhales

When properly fitted and donned, minimal leakage occurs around edges of the respirator when user inhales

When properly fitted and donned, minimal leakage occurs around edges of the respirator when user inhales

Use Limitations

Disposable. Discard after each patient encounter.

Ideally should be discarded after each patient encounter and after aerosol-generating procedures. It should also be discarded when it becomes damaged or deformed; no longer forms an effective seal to the face; becomes wet or visibly dirty; breathing becomes difficult; or if it becomes contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids.

Reusable and must be cleaned/disinfected and stored between each patient interaction

*As of July 2, 2018, NIOSH evaluates N95 FFRs intended for use in healthcare for biocompatibility, flammability, and fluid resistance to ensure conformity to relevant standards during the approval process. These tasks were previously performed by the FDA.



Resources: