



PROTECT YOURSELF IN THE WORKPLACE

Know Which Masks Provide the Best Protection

If you are required to wear masks at work, your employer must give free masks to you. If you work indoors or in vehicles with others and you want to wear a respirator, your employer must give you free respirators, if you ask for them. The respirators must be the right size and your employer must train you on how to wear them correctly, including how to do a seal check.

Your employer cannot discourage or retaliate against you for wearing a mask.



No matter what kind of mask you wear, check that it fits well. Make sure that there are no gaps at the sides or above your nose. Gaps greatly reduce how well masks work.



- If you use a respirator, check the manufacturer's instructions to learn how long it can be worn before it should be thrown away.
- If you use a medical mask, throw it away after you have worn it once.
- If your medical mask or respirator gets wet or dirty, throw it away.

Respirators

- N95 and KN95 respirators are designed to filter at least 95% of airborne particles (KF94s filter 94%).
- Respirators need to make a tight seal on your face. Check the seal each time you put a respirator on. See [NIOSH instructions](#) for how to put a respirator on, check the seal, and take it off.
- If you have [facial hair](#) that affects the seal, you will not be as well protected.
- If you have breathing difficulties, check with your doctor before wearing a respirator. Do not wear a respirator with another mask.
- Beware of counterfeit (fake) respirators as they may not be able to provide the promised protection. See [NIOSH website](#) for more information on how to identify an approved respirator.

Medical Masks

- Medical masks (also called surgical masks or disposable face masks) are designed to block large droplets. They are not designed to fit closely to the face or to filter airborne particles.
- These masks are usually loose fitting. But if they are adjusted to fit closely to the face, they can provide more protection.
- [Improve the fit](#) by knotting the ear loops close to the edge of the mask and tucking the excess material. Or use a mask brace to reduce the amount of air leaking from the edges of the mask.
- Double masking is wearing a medical mask UNDER a tight-fitting cloth mask to increase filtration and reduce air leakage. Double masking provides more protection than a medical mask alone.
- Look for a mask that has a nose wire and at least three layers of non-woven or spun bound fabric and melt-blown fabric, such as polypropylene.

Cloth Masks

- Cloth masks work best if they are made of specialized materials that filter out small particles. Simple cotton masks and gaiters provide the least protection.
- If you are considering wearing a cloth mask, look for a high filtration cloth mask. These are made with specialized filter/layers that have been [tested](#) to show how they perform. Look for a mask with a high-performance level ($\geq 95\%$ particulate filtration efficiency) that has been tested by an accredited third-party laboratory.

For more information, see the CDC webpage [Types of Masks and Respirators](#).