

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Information on the use and fit-testing of N95 Respirators

This fact sheet provides information for health care workers about the use and fit-testing of N95 Respirators

How do we protect ourselves and our staff during an outbreak of influenza?

Occupational health and safety measures and infection prevention and control measures can help protect both health care workers and patients from being exposed to the influenza virus in health care settings.

Protection of workers from infectious diseases involves more than personal protective equipment, and may be best achieved through a strategy known as the hierarchy of controls. The hierarchy of controls is implemented through a range of actions at the source of a potential exposure, along the path, and with the worker. Reducing the risk of influenza transmission in the workplace requires a comprehensive strategy that includes:

- *Engineering controls* that make the work environment or setting safer – e.g. proper ventilation, office layout to support social distancing or use of measures like installation of plexiglass barriers between a source and an employee
- *Administrative and work practices* that reduce the risk of infection – e.g. responsible absenteeism policies, staff education programs
- *Personal protective equipment* used by health workers
- Other infection prevention and control measures that protect patients and visitors as well as health workers

Personal protective equipment is one component of the hierarchy and should be used when other measures such as engineering controls aren't able to completely mitigate risks.

What personal protective equipment do I need to provide to my staff during the current H1N1 situation?

Please consult the guidance documents provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for up-to-date advice on this issue.

Important Health Notices and other materials can be found at:
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/ihn.html>

What is an N95 respirator?

An N95 respirator is a respirator that has been certified to certain test criteria by the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), based on the percentage of small particles they filter from the air when properly used. The designation, N95 refers to the filtering efficiency of a respirator. Individuals who are required to wear an N95 respirator must be fit tested to ensure a proper fit, as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Regulation for Health Care and Residential Facilities.

Fit testing is an element of a respiratory protection program and is conducted in accordance to Canadian Standards Association *Standard for the Selection, Use and Care of Respirators*, CSA Z94.4-02. Fit testing is required prior to using respirators to make sure that the respirator seals to the user's face properly. Fit testing should be carried out at least every two years, and should be done according to the model and make of respirator. In addition, the wearer is required to perform a "user-seal check" each time the

respirator is worn to check the respirator-to-face seal.

How do I know what make and model to be fit-tested for?

You may have already been fit-tested to a certain make or model. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) does not approve particular makes or models. However, as part of its influenza pandemic preparedness activities, the MOHLTC has stockpiled N95 respirators and other infection control supplies. The majority of respirators in the ministry stockpile are products of 3M and include the following models:

- 3M 1870
- 3M 8210
- 3M 1860S
- 3M 1860
- 3M 8110S

You may wish to be fit-tested to these models to make sure you're aligned with the ministry stockpile.

Please note that this stockpile is not being distributed at the present time. Once a decision is made to activate this stockpile, information on how to access it will be provided through the ministry website or through the Health Care Provider Hotline.

Where can I access fit-testing services?

The following are examples of where you can obtain fit-testing services. Please note that this is not a complete list of available services, and that if you have a regular fit-testing provider, you are free to continue to work with that provider. Use of these providers is not compulsory.

- Some N95 manufacturers such as 3M Canada provide fit-testing, with some are able to come to your office. 3M Canada can be contacted at 1-800-265-1840. Some suppliers of respirators are also able to provide fit testing services, such as Levitt Safety at (905)-829-3299.
- The Ontario Safety Association for Community & Healthcare (OSACH) is a non-profit corporation designated as a safe workplace association for the healthcare

sector. OSACH provides advice and assistance regarding respiratory protection, as well as fit testing services for healthcare providers across Ontario. OSACH regional Consultants are accessible by phone or email across the province. Please visit <http://www.osach.ca> or phone (416) 250-7444.

- Providers of occupational health and safety or occupational hygiene services are also available, for example Hot Zone Training Consultants, which can be contacted at 1-888-898-8966. Others can be accessed through the Consultant Directory of the Ontario Occupational Hygiene Association (<http://www.ohao.org/>)
- If you have hospital privileges, you may be able to get fit-tested through your local hospital program, but you will need to speak to the individual facility to determine this as it is a hospital-level policy.

Is there a charge for fit-testing? Will the Ministry be covering me for this fee?

Yes, there is generally a fee associated with fit-testing. There is no plan at present for the ministry to provide coverage for this fee. If you have employees, it's your obligation as an employer to provide any personal protective equipment your employees are required to wear to safely carry out their work.

If you have any additional questions about the use of N95 respirators, or any other questions about the overall response to H1N1 influenza A in Ontario, please contact the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Healthcare Provider Hotline at 1-866-212-2272.