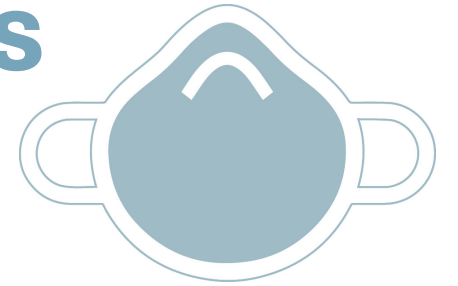# CANADIAN RED CROSS / CROIX-ROUGE CANADIENNE

Health and Safety Guidance

Using Unfitted N95 Respirator Masks

These are masks that have a nose wire (a metal strip along the top of the mask) to help prevent air leakage at the top of the mask. Nose wires can also help to prevent fogging of eyeglasses or safety glasses. To get a good fit, make sure to bend the nose wire over your nose to conform to your face.

What is an N95 Respirator Mask?

An N95 respirator mask is a respiratory protective device that is designed to achieve a very close facial fit when fit tested. In some cases, individuals choose to wear an N95 mask that has not been fit tested.

This means that the fit, or how well the N95 respirator mask seals on the individual's face, has not been checked by a qualified fit tester. In the context of reducing exposure to particulate pollution (like smoke or smog), N95 respirator masks can be effective even if they are not perfectly fitted.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross is providing N95 respirator masks in small, medium and universal sizes.

Factors such as face shape, as well as features like facial hair, dramatically impact how a particular mask will seal against a person's face, and any air leaks due to poor fit will dramatically lower the efficiency of the mask. Working with a professional fit tester is the best way to ensure a good fit. However, to estimate what size you may need, please refer to the below chart :

Estimate your N95 Respirator Mask Size by Weight

MEDIUM 70 – 115 kgs (154 – 253 lbs)

SMALL 45 – 70 kgs (99 – 154 lbs)

*Note: N95 respirator masks are not suitable for children under the age of two.

How should I wear an N95 respirator mask?

The N95 respirator mask should cover both the nose and mouth. It should be worn tight enough to create a seal and it should not be worn over facial hair. It is not adequate for children under the age of two.
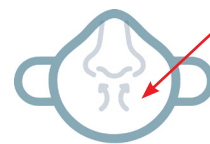
General Fit

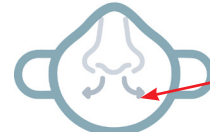**1** Make sure your N95 respirator mask completely covers your nose, mouth, and chin.
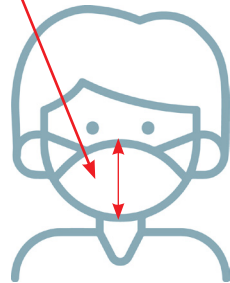
2 Check for gaps or air leaks between your face and your respirator mask.

Gently inhale. When you breathe in, the N95 should draw in slightly toward your face and collapse.

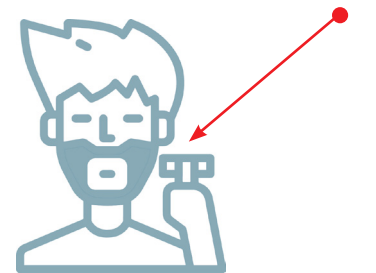**Gently exhale.** The N95 should fill up with air.

3 Adjust the ties, bands or ear loops, if necessary.

4 Consider keeping facial hair shaved or short if possible, as this allows the respirator mask to fit more closely to your face.

When to discard your N95 respirator mask

- Discard and do not reuse any N95 respirator mask that has blood, nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids on it.
- Discard and do not reuse any N95 respirator masks with any obvious damage, such as broken straps or broken nose pieces, or one that has become hard to breathe through.

Safety Considerations

If you are wearing an N95 respirator mask, you may experience some discomfort due to the tight fit, if worn for an extended period of time.

Users should self-monitor for the following subjective symptoms, which include but are not limited to nausea, headache, light-headedness, visual difficulties, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, palpitations, confusion, or difficulty communicating with a respirator mask on.

If an N95 mask user is experiencing a respiratory emergency, a first aid response should include removing the individual from the hazard (ensure that the individual is brought inside to a well-ventilated area), remove the N95 respirator mask, and seek help to ensure the health and safety of the individual.

Other ways to protect yourself against wildfire smoke

Stay indoors when the air quality is poor. Most areas will provide air quality ratings using the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI). Regularly monitor the AQHI in your area and follow the guidance provided. To find the AQHI for your region, visit the Environment Canada website at: https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/

Reduce or reschedule outdoor physical activities and avoid strenuous activity outdoors. If you must be outdoors, take frequent breaks indoors to limit your exposure to wildfire smoke.