

Reprocessing of N95 Respirators – April 17

Q. What are N95 respirators?

A: According to Health Canada, N95 respirators (or particulate filtering face-piece respirators) are Class I medical devices. They are manufactured by companies that hold a Medical Device Establishment License (MDEL). In a health-care setting, N95 respirators protect against exposure to respiratory viruses and bacteria. The U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) evaluates, tests and certifies N95 respirators. [Learn more here.](#)

Q. What do I do with my used N95 respirator?

A: Eastern Health is moving forward with the collection and sterilization of used N95 respirators.

Across Eastern Health, you will see secured collection bins marked for N95 recycling. Collection bins are placed in all areas that use N95 respirators, including the COVID-19 unit. Health-care providers are asked to bag their used, not visibly soiled or damaged N95 respirator in the paper bags provided for sterilization at these collection points. Soiled or damaged N95 respirators should be discarded as per usual process. If you work in pharmacy or around pharmaceuticals, your N95 respirator will not be reprocessed.

Q. What happens to the collected, used N95 respirators?

A: The bagged, used N95 respirators in the collection bins are transported to the Medical Device Reprocessing Department. The used N95 respirators will be reprocessed through sterilization and then returned to the unit for the same user to retrieve for their next use. Each N95 respirator will be reprocessed no more than two times.

Q. How will I know that I am receiving back the same N95 respirator I previously used?

A: Health Canada requires the sterilization of N95 respirators to be used by a single user. Prior to use, staff are asked to mark their name, employee number and unit with a permanent marker on the label that will be provided. Permanent markers will be supplied to the units. You should place the label on the back lower strap of the respirator by folding it over to attach it to the strap.

Q. How do we know that a N95 respirator is safe and effective when reused?

A: Recent studies have shown that the sterilization of N95 respirators using the Sterrad hydrogen peroxide sterilizer is a proven method of decontamination and can safely extend the life of existing N95 respirators.

Rigorous validation testing by the manufacturer with oversight from Health Canada has proven this to be an effective approach to help the health-care industry maintain a safe supply of N95 respirators. Decisions on the reprocessing of N95 respirators are based on research and evidence.

For more information, please see the following articles on this area:

- [Decontamination and Reuse of N95 Respirators with Hydrogen Peroxide Vapor to Address Worldwide Personal Protective Equipment Shortages During the SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID-19\) Pandemic\(PDF 175k\) Antony Schwartz et al. Duke University, Applied Biosafety: Journal of ABSA International, March 26, 2020 \(PDF\).](#)
- [Advanced Sterilization Products \(ASP\), Instructions for Use for Reprocessing N95 Masks in STERRAD® Sterilization Systems during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency \(PDF\)](#)
- 3M Personal Safety Division, Cellulose Certification Letter – Filtering Facepiece Respirators (PDF)

Q. I have questions/concerns. Who can I talk to?

A: Please speak to your manager, depending on the nature of your questions, you can also contact [Infection Prevention and Control](#) or [Medical Device Reprocessing](#).

The [Employee & Physician Navigation Line is available](#) 7 days a week, 24 hours a day by calling 709-752-3663.