Protocol for The Re-use of N95 Respirators: Staff Guidance

These recommendations are intended for use by healthcare professionals to protect them from job-related risks of exposure to infectious respiratory illnesses, COVID-19.

- These recommendations are temporary while there are national and international shortages of protective equipment.
- VNSNY has implemented limited re-use of N95 respirators according to CDC guidance during this crisis.
- Limited re-use of facemasks is the practice of using the same facemask by one Health Care Personnel (HCP) for multiple encounters with different patients but removing it after each encounter.
- Place a surgical mask or face shield over the N95 respirator to prevent droplet contamination of the N95 respirator.
- Because we are requiring you to cover the N95 respirator mask, it can be re-used between multiple patients over multiple shifts until visibly soiled, contaminated, wet, or fails a fit check.
- To conserve your N95 respirator and to keep it clean between uses, put it in a paper bag that will be provided to you.
- The N95 respirator will be issued to staff with an appropriate paper bag or container that allows breathability.

- Care should be taken to ensure that health care personnel (HCP) do not touch outer surfaces of the mask during care, and that mask removal and replacement be done in a careful and deliberate manner.
- The N95 respirator should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, wet, or hard to breathe through.
- The N95 respirator must be used when in contact with patients who use respiratory support and treatment devices or procedures, for example:
  - Suctioning endotracheal tube
  - CPAP or BIPAP masks
  - Nebulizer treatments

The N95 may be re-used as long as they are able to seal, were not worn during an aerosol generating procedure or have reached the end of their use by being soiled, damaged or moist from sweat or insensible fluid loss through breathing.
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STEP 1. First time N95 respirator use:

**Donning**
Once the N95 respirator is donned and the seal check is performed, apply a surgical mask over the N95 respirator as a barrier to protect it from surface contamination during care. Goggles/Face shield should be used when indicated.

**Donning**
- Perform hand hygiene
- Don gown
- Don the N95 respirator
- Don a surgical mask over the N95 respirator
- Perform a negative/positive seal check by doing the following:
  - No air should be felt around the perimeter while blowing out. If you feel air coming out it is not a tight seal.
  - When taking a small breath in, the mask should pucker in slightly. If it does not, it is not re-usable.
  - When breathing out you should feel the respirator expand slightly. If it does not, it is not re-usable.
  - If not a tight seal, the respirator cannot be re-used.
  - Ensure the mask is breathable, if unable to breathe in the mask, the respirator cannot be re-used.
  - Perform hand hygiene and don gloves following seal check.
  - Don surgical face mask with goggles or full-face shield over N95.

During patient care, take care to **NOT TOUCH** your masks or eye protection.

**(A) Doffing when a procedure mask barrier is used**

- Exit the patient room and close the door if possible.
- Remove the face shield if worn and discard if connected to the face mask.
- If the face shield is reusable remove by grasping the sides of the face shield being careful not to touch the front of the shield.

**DO NOT** touch the front on the mask because it may be contaminated.
  a. Remove the surgical mask covering the N95 and discard by holding the straps (ear loops).
  b. Remove gloves.
  c. Perform hand hygiene, don new gloves, use a germicidal wipe to prepare a surface upon which the eye goggles will be placed and remove goggles.
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d. Reusable eye goggles are disinfected using a germicidal wipe while observing manufacturers contact time per instructions for use.
e. Doff gloves and perform hand hygiene, remove N95 respirator and perform hand hygiene.
f. After completing all doffing steps. Store goggles for reuse.
g. Perform hand hygiene.

STEP 2

(B) Storage of Previously Worn N-95 Respirators:
   a. After removing N95, visually inspect for contamination, distortion in shape/form.
   b. If contaminated/wet, creased or bent, N95 should be discarded.
   c. If the N95 is NOT visibly contaminated or distorted, carefully store to avoid destroying the shape and consistency of the mask.
   d. The N95 should be stored in a well-ventilated container (i.e., paper bag) with the users name & date.
   e. Perform hand hygiene

(C) Process to re-use your N95 respirator:
Remove N95 mask from paper storage bag and visually inspect for distortion. If creased or bent do not re-use. Perform donning and doffing procedure as outlined above.

Best practice:

1. Do all procedures in a separate, well-ventilated room.
2. Clean all surfaces before and after the procedure.
3. Adhere to standard precaution including proper hand hygiene.
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Steps for N95 Respirator Re-Use

PPE: N95: Extended Use

• Wear for extended time without removal
• Multiple patients
• Dispose if soiled or damaged
• Hand hygiene after removal

Re-Use of N95 Respirators

• Store between uses
• Clean, breathable container
• Nothing in or on respirator
• Use clean gloves when donning used N95

Re-Use of N95 Respirators

Manufacturer’s guidelines
Mask over N95 or Cleanable face shield
Contact transmission is unknown
Handle carefully
Hand hygiene after removal

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*Extended use has been recommended as an option for conserving respirators during previous respiratory pathogen outbreaks and pandemics.*

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