

Facemask and Respirator Guidance for H1N1 Virus Response

TECHNICAL BULLETIN



According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there are two distinct application categories for facemasks and respirators: occupational (includes hospital and healthcare settings) and non-occupational (includes home, community and workplace settings). Because of differences in the type and duration of exposure, the facemask recommendations for the non-occupational community setting differ from those for healthcare settings. These mask recommendations specify the use of Food & Drug Administration (FDA) approved medical facemasks or NIOSH certified N95 respirators (see www.pandemicflu.gov). Specific guidance on when to use N95 respirators and when to use FDA approved facemasks is provided in Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reference documents.

The procedure masks offered by DuPont Personal Protection are not FDA approved medical facemasks and are not NIOSH certified N95 respirators.

Surgical mask and respirator use is one component of a system of infection control practices to prevent the spread of infection between infected and non-infected persons where pandemic influenza patients might receive health care services (e.g., hospitals, emergency departments, out-patient facilities, residential care facilities, emergency medical services, home health care delivery). During an influenza pandemic, surgical masks and respirators—along with other forms of personal protective equipment (PPE) (e.g., gloves, gowns, and goggles)—should be used by health care personnel in health care settings in conjunction with CDC Standard and Droplet Precautions, respiratory hygiene, cough etiquette, vaccination, and early diagnosis and treatment.

There is very limited information on the use of facemasks or respirators for the control of pandemic influenza in community settings (home, community and workplace). Thus, it is difficult to assess their potential effectiveness in controlling influenza in these settings. In the absence of definitive data, the interim guidance documents issued by the CDC draw from the principles of traditional infection control and industrial hygiene approaches used for enhancing protection of healthcare personnel in the healthcare setting during an influenza pandemic. *Facemasks and respirators should be used in combination with other preventive measures, such as hand hygiene and social distancing, to help reduce the risk for influenza infection during a pandemic.*

The interim guidance provided by the CDC is being updated as new information becomes available.

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**DuPont
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Customer Service:

Canada 1-800-387-9326

Mexico (52) 55 57 22 1222

United States 1-800-931-3456

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