

N95 Respirator Reprocessing and Reuse Process

The goal of this new innovative program is to conserve our total supply of N95 respirators during a time in which supply availability is limited. This re-use strategy is just one of several personal protective equipment (PPE) conservation tactics being actively pursued by Vanderbilt University Medical Center. **This initiative only works with YOUR participation.**

Staff Labeling of New N95 Respirators

Units participating in the program and corresponding unit codes can be found on COVID Website. The unique unit code will be formatted as "VCV-__" (total of 5 characters) and will correlate to the unit/department to which the N95 respirator will be returned. Unit codes will also be noted on a poster above each N95 collection bin.

If using a new N95 respirator, staff will be asked to label N95 with a Sharpie. On the front of the N95 please label the following: VCV-Unit Code (reference unit code grid) with Last Name, First Name no initials and please write legibly.

When ready to discard, place your used N95 in the collection bin here.

Important! This code is specific to pickup location

Front of Mask
VCV- AA
Last Name, First Name



Please Note: If you float through various clinical areas please label your N95 respirator with your home unit/dept. code (see corresponding unit code grid). The N95 will be returned to the distribution location, according to your unit/dept. code.

Returning N95 Respirators

Once finished using the N95 respirator per policy guidelines, staff should remove their labeled N95 respirators and put them in the N95 designated collection bins. Collection bins will remain the same in all areas.

If the N95 respirator is visibly soiled, damaged or wet, place the mask in the designated collection bin and the reprocessing team will dispose of them. Reprocessing staff will collect daily on all units.

Nothing other than the N95s should be placed inside collection receptacles. If trash or other items are found inside the collection bag, Battelle will discard the entire bag. If individual N95 respirators are unlabeled, damaged, or visibly soiled (e.g. by makeup, facial lotions, etc.), Battelle will discard these as they cannot be properly decontaminated.

Staff should retrieve a new N95 Respirator

If it's the first time you are participating in this reprocessing program, if your N95 respirator has not yet returned to you, or if you N95 respirator is soiled/damaged and a new one needed.

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Frequently Asked Questions:

How should I handle the respirator when placing it into the brown bag?

- Put on a new pair of gloves after performing hand hygiene.
- Remove N95 and visually inspect for contamination, distortion in shape/form. If contaminated/wet, creased or bent, N95 should be discarded.
- If the N95 is NOT visibly contaminated or distorted, carefully store it in a brown paper bag to avoid destroying the shape and consistency of the mask.
- Doff gloves and perform hand hygiene

Why do I need to keep the same respirator? Can't I use any respirator that has been disinfected?

Because these require a specific tight fit to your face, respirators will conform to your facial characteristics. As such, reuse of another person's respirator may not provide the same level of fit.

How often can a specific respirator be reused? Why?

Because the vaporized hydrogen peroxide disinfection process can over time harm the integrity of the respirator, the protocol only allows for reuse of a specific respirator 20 times post-disinfection out of an abundance of caution. Damage to the device should not occur after this limited amount of disinfection cycles.

Should I perform a fit check when I don a respirator that has undergone the decontamination process?

Yes! Each healthcare provider is responsible for ensuring the integrity of fit (no leaks) before reuse. **Pay special attention to the nose piece, foam, and straps.** You as the user should not use and **must discard** any respirator that is damaged or does not have a tight seal.

The following steps are followed for Battelle disinfection:

If a unit has been **approved for reprocessing of N95 used on COVID +/- Suspected Patients**, there will be a **Red Bin** for collection placed on the unit. All N95s (both those used for care of suspect/confirmed COVID patients as well as those use for all procedures due to concern for aerosol-generation risk) will be collected in the same manner. Sterile processing staff will collect N95 respirators at 8am and 8pm. When collecting from these units, they will wear a surgical mask and gloves. Verify unit is documented on bag and place bagged N95 in single **Red Bin** collection container (Picture D). All reprocessed N95 respirators will be returned in a **Clear Bin** with N-95 clean signage. **Area managers can request approval for reprocessing by submitting an email to the PPE approval committee.**

