Why do I need to wear a respirator?

- Your job duties may require you to pre-package hazardous medications.
- Your job duties may require you to prepare injectable doses of hazardous medication outside of the biological safety cabinet (BSC).
- Your job duties may require you to decontaminate the BSC where hazardous medications are prepared.
- Your job duties may require you to administer hazardous aerosolized drugs (i.e. ribavirin)
- Your job duties may require you to clean hazardous drug spills.

Why do I need to be fit-tested to wear the respirator?

- The fit-testing is performed to provide you with the respirator that best fits your face. One size does not fit all.
- Fit-testing is performed before the employee is required to wear the respirator in the workplace (usually during orientation) and annually thereafter. Fit testing must be repeated whenever respirator design or facial changes occur that could affect the proper fit of the respirator. Additional fit testing is necessary when a different size or make of respirator must be used; or the employee has a substantial weight gain/loss, cosmetic surgery, or facial scarring.

When do I need to wear my respirator?

- The mask is worn when using the pre-packaging machine to package hazardous medications.
- For areas that do not have a BSC, the mask is worn when preparing injectable doses of hazardous medications. This should be done in an isolated area where movement in and out of the area by other employees is minimized to decrease the potential for aerosolization.
- The mask is worn during monthly decontamination of the BSC.
- The mask is worn when cleaning hazardous drug spills outside the BSC or within the BSC whenever the hood shield must be raised.
- The mask is worn when administering hazardous aerosolized drugs or other high risk administrations of hazardous medications.
- Refer to VUMC policy SA 20-10.04 Hazardous Medication Handling for specific procedures.

How does the respirator work?

- The respirator is designed to filter the air before it is inhaled by the person wearing the respirator.
- The fabric of the respirator has an electrostatic charge that acts to trap particles preventing filter penetration.

What can this respirator not be used for?

The primary function for this respirator is for protection against hazardous medications and airborne diseases. It is not meant for the following exposures:

- Oxygen deficient atmospheres
- Chemical spills
- For protection against hazardous concentrations of gases or vapors
- For sandblasting, painting, or asbestos removal
Who can wear an N95 respirator?

Personal respiratory protection should be used by healthcare workers for the work duties listed previously. N95 Respirators are also used for protection against airborne infectious diseases. Faculty, housestaff, staff and students who have been medically cleared, trained and fit tested can wear the appropriate N95 respirator.

Who should not wear an N95 respirator?

- Any healthcare worker that is restricted from use by recommendation of Vanderbilt Occupational Health.
- Patients and visitors are not permitted to wear the respirators.
- Persons with beards or facial hair in the seal area of the respirator cannot be fit tested due to the inability to get a good facial seal. OSHA law prohibits those individuals to wear a mask until the person is clean-shaven and fit-tested.

What about reuse and disposal?

- When using the N95 respirator for handling hazardous pharmaceuticals, discard after a single use.
- Dispose of the respirator in the same way as other PPE being used to protect against hazardous medications.
- New respirators can be found in the Pharmacy supply area, unit clean storage area or through Central Supply. Ask your supervisor for assistance if you are unable to locate a new respirator.

What if the health care provider at Occupational Health restricts my use of a respirator?

Inform your supervisor immediately and only use your respirator as directed by Occupational Health. If you begin to feel uncomfortable while wearing your respirator, cease the activity, remove yourself from the potentially infectious environment, and remove the respirator.

What if the health care provider denies my use of a respirator?

Inform your supervisor immediately and do not participate in any activity that would require use of a respirator. If at some time your health condition subsides, call Vanderbilt Environmental Health and Safety at 615-322-2057 or email respirator@vanderbilt.edu.

Where can I get my annual fit test?

- For regularly scheduled fit-test sessions, visit the VEHS web site at https://www.vumc.org/safety/clinical/n95-respirator-program. Annual Re-fits can attend ALL available open fit testing sessions, even the Initial sessions. Initial fit testers must attend Initial sessions only.

- Request fit-testing for individuals or small groups at our VEHS office. Individuals may request appointments outside of our regular fit testing sessions. Send a detailed message to respirator@vanderbilt.edu to request scheduling an appointment.

For additional information regarding respirators, ask for a Medical Center Safety Officer at 615-322-2057.