

Using a disposable respirator

Masks are NOT all the same.

**Three things matter:
fit, filter and function.**

Respirators are the best kinds of masks on all counts. They protect you **and** others.

They have special materials to **filter** the air you inhale and exhale (see picture). The materials do not work well if the respirator gets wet or dirty.



Used properly, these respirators will filter out almost every particle in the air. (You need a different kind for vapours or gases.)

Unlike other masks, respirators do not have ear loops. They have **two straps to give you a good fit**. Hair on your face around the edges of the respirator stops a good fit. It allows leaks when you inhale or exhale.

For more information about how these respirators work, see *The genius of N95 masks* on Youtube. The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has a good video about putting on and taking off these disposable respirators <https://bit.ly/3AhkDP5> (English) and <https://bit.ly/3AY4oa3> (Spanish).

Putting on the respirator

If you're going to wear something on your head or around your neck, put the respirator on first.



Take the respirator from the package. Stretch the straps.

Hold it with the logo facing up.

Open the top and bottom flaps all the way. Pinch the bottom and top flaps, and pull them out. Bend the nose piece around your thumb as you do this. Try not to touch the inside.

Hold the respirator in one hand. Get the straps on the outside of your hand.

Place it on your face with the metal nose piece on the bridge or top of your nose.



Make sure the bottom panel is snug at your chin. Some people find it is easier to tuck the bottom part under the chin first.

It doesn't matter which strap goes on first. The **top strap goes** at the back of your head where it won't move. The **bottom strap goes** over your head and below your ears around your neck. It should be against the skin, not around your hair.

The respirator should rest comfortably on your face. The flaps should be unfolded all the way, and securely in place.

Make sure that nothing stops getting a good fit or seal to your face. Check hair, jewelry and clothing.

Use the fingertips of both hands to press the **metal nose piece** where your nose meets your cheeks. (Pinching the top of your nose can leave a space there.)



Make it fit the shape of your whole nose and onto your cheeks. That gives a tight seal.

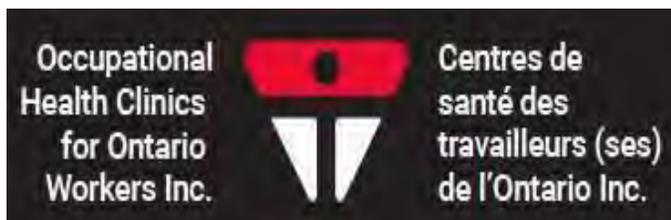
Checking the fit (the seal)

Put your hands over the center panel. Breathe in and out sharply. Be careful not to move the respirator.



If it doesn't have a good seal, you'll likely feel air escaping. If air leaks around the nose or your glasses fog up, adjust the metal strips. If air leaks from the sides, adjust the head straps. **Make sure the respirator is snug against your face.**

Check the seal each time you put on the respirator.



Taking off the respirator

Although particles should be trapped inside the filter material, try to touch only the straps.

The simplest way is to gently hold the bottom strap, and pull it carefully over your head. Do the same thing with the top strap. They should come off easily.



You can re-use the respirator

These are disposable respirators. If you want to re-use one, put the respirator in a paper bag for four to five days and use a new one each day. **If it's wet or dirty, it won't work properly.**



When you're done with it, use the respirator recycling program or put the respirator in the garbage. Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

This fact sheet was prepared for OHCOW's migrant agricultural worker program, as part of the KAIROS project, *Empowering Temporary Foreign Workers during COVID-19*. (Updated January, 2022)

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mfw@ohcow.on.ca.

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