

Masks vs. Surgical Respirators: A Practical Comparison

In light of the current public health emergency, you may be considering the use of masks or respirators. But do you know the difference between the two and when one might be a better fit than the other?



Surgical Masks

Surgical masks are intended to put a barrier between the wearer and the environment. Some may contain filter media, but they do not form a tight seal around the wearer's face. Masks protect the wearer from splashes and spray and protect the patient from particles expelled by the wearer.

- Helps reduce the risk of large particles (e.g. saliva and mucus) expelled by the wearer from reaching patients
- Helps reduce the wearer's exposure to blood and other body fluids
- Fits loosely and does not require fit testing or seal checks
- Cleared for sale by the U.S. FDA
- Does not reduce user exposure to airborne particles

VS.

Protects patient from particles expelled by wearer?

Protects wearer from splashes and spray?

Reduces wearer exposure to airborne particles?

Fluid resistant?

Fits tightly on face?

Requires fit testing?



Surgical Respirators

Respirators are specially designed to protect the wearer from particulates in the environment, including viruses and bacteria. They contain specialized filter media and form a tight seal around the face. Respirators help prevent the wearer from inhaling certain airborne particles, while also protecting the patient from particles expelled by the wearer.

- Helps reduce exposure to certain airborne particles – by at least 95% in the case of N95 models
- 3M's proprietary filter media features highly charged microfibers designed to significantly enhance capture of airborne particles and lessen breathing resistance
- Designed to fit tightly and require fit testing and seal checks to ensure a protective fit
- Tested and certified by NIOSH and cleared for healthcare use by the U.S. FDA
- Recommended for healthcare workers who may be exposed to airborne particles.