

Preserving Our Supplies of Respirators and Masks

February 11 2020, Tuesday

The novel coronavirus (19nCoV) outbreak has caused a worldwide shortage of N95 respirators and other types of face masks used in medical settings. As a result, we must assume that supplies will be restricted for some time to come and, therefore, ensure that these devices are available when specifically indicated.

The general guidelines for the use of face masks are as follows:

- N95 respirators are only indicated for health care workers who come into close contact with persons with an airborne infection warranting airborne isolation precautions.
- Standard medical/surgical face masks are typically indicated in the following situations:
 - Practitioners who are performing procedures that require antiseptic technique
 - Individuals who work in a health care setting who have not been vaccinated against influenza
 - Individuals who are exhibiting upper respiratory symptoms, such as cough and fever, who have not yet been placed in isolation

Materials Management is taking aggressive steps, outlined below, to preserve our inventory of N95 respirators to ensure that we have them when specifically needed.

We are also taking steps to preserve our inventory of standard medical/surgical face masks and Security will assist with closely managing this stock. Individual departments are responsible for ensuring that masks are only used in appropriate clinical situations.

If you, yourself, are experiencing cold or flu-like symptoms, please exercise good judgment and consider staying home to avoid exposing others to your illness.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local Infection Prevention department.

Managing, securing and conserving N95 respirators:

1. Materials Management will remove all N95 respirators from the hospital supply rooms, except for certain key departments, including Emergency Departments

and Medical Intensive Care Units, as well as other locations specifically designated by Infection Prevention.

2. Materials Management will collect all N95 respirators from isolation carts that are not being used for airborne precautions.
3. Isolation carts in place to support the care of specific airborne isolation patients should, of course, maintain a supply of N95s. However, the unit is expected to closely monitor the use and the number of respirators left on the cart at any time.
4. Only health care workers who have undergone fit-testing should wear N95 respirators. Visitors should never be offered N95 respirators. Even in a confirmed case of 19nCoV, the CDC recommends visitors be given gowns, gloves, and surgical or procedure masks only.
5. Upon discontinuation of a patient from isolation, the unit should immediately gather and secure all remaining N95 respirators designated for that patient and contact Materials Management to retrieve them. A signature form will be used to document pick-up and return of the devices.

During Materials Management hours of service: a unit that receives an airborne isolation patient should contact Materials Management to obtain N95 respirators.

After-hours support: a unit that receives an airborne isolation patient when Materials Management is closed should obtain N95 respirators from one of the designated key departments (e.g., Emergency Departments and Medical Intensive Care Units) until Materials Management is able to provide them.

This protocol will remain in effect until the global supply chain of N95 respirators and masks is stabilized and our ability to procure them is restored.

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