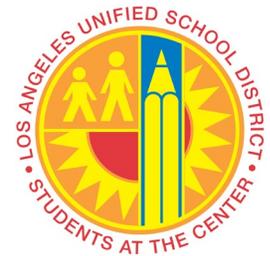




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SAFETY ALERT

No. 22-01

**EMPLOYEE USE OF N95, KN95, AND KF94 RESPIRATORS
& SURGICAL MASKS FOR COVID-19**

January 2022

To protect individuals from COVID-19 and the surging Omicron variant, all employees working in person must wear a medical-grade surgical mask, or a respirator such as an N95, KN95, or KF94. Workers may no longer wear a cloth mask by itself at a District site. However, a cloth mask may be worn over a surgical-style disposable mask, which is known as a “double-mask”. This new guidance is in compliance with Los Angeles County’s new [Health Officer Order](#).



Should you wear a surgical mask or a respirator?

There are many types of masks you can use to protect against getting and spreading COVID-19. Choose a mask:

1. That fits snugly against your nose and chin with no large gaps around the sides of the face or your nose, AND
2. That has three or more layers of tightly woven or non-woven material, AND
3. That you will be comfortable wearing.

Respirators such as an N95, KN95, or KF94 offer greater filtration versus surgical masks, but the latter offers the appropriate protection and are far more comfortable to wear. Respirators tend to be harder to breathe through and the straps can cause more irritation. In health care settings where COVID-19 patients are being cared for, personnel should use N95s because they offer the most protection. It is a personal choice provided you use any one of the appropriate options listed above.

So, what's the difference between N95s, KN95s, and KF94s and is one just as good as another?

These are all high-filtration respirators, made with a material that has an electrostatic charge, which uses static electricity to trap incoming virus particles. When worn correctly, they are designed to filter out around 95% or more of airborne particles. N95s are tested and comply

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with U.S. health and safety standards. They typically have a tighter fit and are secured with one or more straps around the head. KN95s are designed per Chinese government safety standards and KF94s are the South Korean equivalent. Most KN95s and KF94s attach with ear loops, which many people find more comfortable but may not seal quite as tightly to your face.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends using N95s for no more than five uses, which means that they may be used on multiple days if the respirator is kept clean. This does not apply to health care settings where N95s are intended to be single-use. There is no specific advice for KN95 or KF94 respirators, but the same logic may be applied.

Since N95s are U.S. regulated respirators, there are some safety standards that apply specifically to their use. Refer to [Safety Alert 21-01, Voluntary Use of N95 Respirators By Employees](#) for additional information.

What about surgical masks?

Also called medical procedure, dental, or disposable masks, they also carry an electrostatic charge.

- Look for a mask that has multiple layers of non-woven material and a nose wire.
- The fit of surgical masks can be improved with a simple adjustment (knotting and tucking).
- The fit AND filtration of surgical masks can be improved by wearing them UNDER a cloth mask (see Double masking).
- Be aware that there are surgical-style masks that may look the same as true medical procedure or surgical masks but may not work as well.
- One sign that a mask is not a real surgical mask is if you put a drop of water on the front of the mask and it soaks into the mask instead of forming beads on the surface.
- Throw the mask away if it is wet/or dirty or after a day of use, whichever comes first.

What is available for use?

Los Angeles Unified has been working around the clock to secure as many surgical masks and respirators as possible to provide our employees with protection in compliance with Los Angeles County's [Health Officer Order](#) and our [COVID-19 Containment, Response & Control Plan](#). While surgical masks should be already on hand and available for immediate use, respirators are far less available, but our buyers in the Procurement Services Division are securing more every day. There may be instances where a requested respirator may not be readily available, but one will be provided as soon as possible. In the interim, the use of a surgical mask is still health-protective and in compliance with the Health Orders.

Refer to the attached *Updated COVID-19 Masking Requirements for School District Staff* handout for additional information. Direct questions to OEHSQuestions@lausd.net, (213) 241-3199, or visit our website at <https://achieve.lausd.net/oehs>.

References: 1. Maria Goody, "Ready for an N95? Here's how to find a high-quality one that fits you well", National Public Radio, January 2022
2. "COVID-19 Masks", Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, January 2022



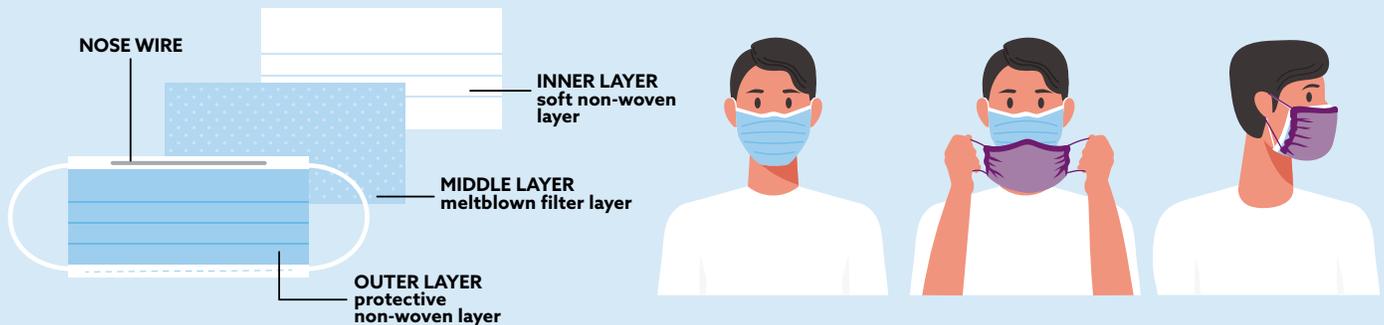
UPDATED COVID-19 MASKING REQUIREMENTS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT STAFF: JANUARY 2022

Due to very high rates of COVID-19 transmission, Los Angeles County has enhanced the masking requirements for employees in the [Health Officer Order](#) and the Los Angeles Unified School District expects all District employees working in person to comply.

NOTE: Workers may no longer wear a cloth mask by itself at a District site. A cloth mask may be worn over a surgical-style disposable mask as a layer to "double-mask".

MASKS WORN BY WORKERS AT A DISTRICT SITE MUST BE ONE OF THESE THREE TYPES:

SURGICAL-STYLE DISPOSABLE MASK



Surgical-style disposable mask that has multiple layers of non-woven material and a nose wire. Double-masking is recommended with a surgical-style mask. Wear a surgical-style mask with a cloth mask over it to improve fit and filtration.

N95 RESPIRATOR



Regulated by U.S. agencies. Has a minimum filtration efficiency of 95%. Details provided in [Voluntary Use of N95 Respirators by Employees](#).

KN95 RESPIRATOR



Not regulated by U.S. agencies. It is recommended to wear one that has been assessed by the [National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory](#) and found to have a minimum filtration efficiency of 95% or higher.

Make sure your mask fits well and provides adequate protection

- The mask should completely cover your nose and mouth.
- The mask should fit snugly against your nose, the sides of your face, and under your chin, without gaps.
- Do not wear masks with a valve.
- Do not use a bandana, scarf, or neck gaiter as a mask.
- Do not use a face shield instead of a mask.