



COMPLIANCE CONSULTING
GROUP, LLC

Memorandum

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As the country and our industry continue to deal with the upheaval and uncertainty related to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic, nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities are being inundated with changing information, new protocols, and updated guidance. To assist your facility in processing the information available, we will be sending out regular updates related to relevant and important regulatory guidance.

Today's update is related to the CDC guidance on how to extend the use of N95 respirators.

The CDC recommends a combination of approaches to conserve supplies while safeguarding health care workers and their patients. Facilities should

- minimize the number of individuals who need to use respiratory protection;
- use alternatives to N95 respirators, when feasible;
- prioritize the use of N95 respirators for those personnel at the highest risk of contracting or experiencing complications of infection; and
- implement practices allowing extended use and/or limited reuse of N95 respirators, when acceptable.

Extended use refers to the practice of wearing the same N95 respirator for repeated encounters with several patients, without removing the respirator between patient encounters.

Reuse of respirators refers to the practicing of removing, or "doffing", the respirator after each patient encounter. **Extended use is favored over reuse, when possible.**

Your facility should create clear, written guidance instructing staff on protocols involving extended use or reuse of N95 respirators, including instructions to

- discard N95 respirators following use during aerosol generating procedures;
- discard N95 respirators contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients;
- discard N95 respirators following close contact with, or exit from, the care area of any patient co-infected with an infectious disease requiring contact precautions;
- consider use of a cleanable face shield over an N95 respirator and/or other steps (e.g., masking patients, use of engineering controls) to reduce surface contamination;
- perform hand hygiene with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the respirator (if necessary, for comfort or to maintain fit);
- discard any respirator that is obviously damaged or becomes hard to breathe through.

The CDC has provided a checklist for use by healthcare facilities to optimize their existing supply of N95 respirators during the COVID-19 pandemic.