AUBURN UNIVERSITY

DECONTAMINATION AND REUSE OF FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS

Risk Management and Safety

The CDC recommends only reusing disposable filtering facepiece respirators (FFRs) as a contingency capacity to conserve available supplies for healthcare environments during a pandemic. Strategies for FFR extended use and reuse without decontamination are currently available from CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH).

FFR decontamination should only come into play when supplies are constrained where at least five respirators are not available for each healthcare worker who needs them. Decontamination and subsequent reuse of FFRs should only be practiced as a crisis capacity strategy. At present, FFRs are considered one time use and there are no manufacturer authorized methods for FFR decontamination prior to reuse. Only respirator manufacturers can reliably provide guidance on how to decontaminate their specific models of FFRs. In absence of manufacturer's recommendations, third parties may also provide guidance or procedures on how to decontaminate respirators without impacting respirator performance. Decontamination might cause poorer fit, filtration efficiency, and breathability of disposable FFRs as a result of changes to the filtering material, straps, nose bridge material, or strap attachments of the FFR.

An effective FFR decontamination method should reduce the pathogen burden, maintain the function of the FFR, and present no residual chemical hazard. The filter media in NIOSH-approved respirators varies by manufacturer. The ability of the respirator filter media to withstand cleaning and disinfection are not NIOSH performance requirements. The NIOSH's National Personal Protective Technology Laboratory (NPPTL) and other researchers have investigated the impact of various decontamination methods on filtration efficiency, facepiece fit of FFRs, and the ability to reduce viable virus or bacteria on the FFRs.

No current data exists supporting the effectiveness of these decontamination methods specifically against SARS-CoV-2 on an FFR. Other pathogens may also be present on FFRs and there is only limited data available for other pathogens. Further work is needed to assure SARS-CoV-2 and other pathogens are inactivated. Therefore, even after decontamination, these FFRs should be handled carefully.

Health care professionals should take the following precautionary measures prior to using a decontaminated FFR:

- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the FFR.
- Avoid touching the inside of the FFR.
- Use a pair of clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning and performing a user seal check.
- Visually inspect the FFR to determine if its integrity has been compromised.
- Check that components such as the straps, nose bridge, and nose foam material did not degrade, which can affect the quality of the fit, and seal.
- If the integrity of any part of the FFR is compromised, or if a successful user seal check cannot be performed, discard the FFR and try another FFR.
- Users should perform a user seal check immediately after they don each FFR and should not use an FFR on which they cannot perform a successful user seal check.

Table 1. Summary of crisis standards of care decontamination recommendations

Method	Manufacturer or third-party guidance or procedures available	Recommendation for use after decontamination	Additional use considerations
Ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI)	Yes	Can be worn for any patient care activities	• Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the FFR. • Avoid touching the inside of the FFR. • Use a pair of clean (non-sterile) gloves when donning and performing a user seal check. • Visually inspect the FFR to determine if its integrity has been compromised. • Check that components such as the straps, nose bridge, and nose foam material did not degrade, which can affect the quality of the fit, and seal. • If the integrity of any part of the FFR is compromised, or if a successful user seal check cannot be performed, discard the FFR and try another FFR. • Users should perform a user seal check immediately after they don each FFR and should not use an FFR on which they cannot perform a successful user seal check.
Vaporous hydrogen peroxide (VHP)			
Moist heat			
Ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI)	No	Can be worn for patient care activities except when performing or present for an aerosol generating procedure	
Vaporous hydrogen peroxide (VHP)			
Moist heat			

Table 2. Decontamination methods evaluated for each FFR model

FFR Model	Type	Vaporous hydrogen peroxide (VHP)	Ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI)	Ethylene oxide (EtO)	Steam	Moist heat	Hydrogen peroxide
3M 1860	N95	x	x	x	x	x	x
3M 1870	N95	x	x	x	x	x	x
3M 8000	N95	x	x	x	x	x	x
3M 8210	N95	x	x	x	x	x	x
3M 9210	N95		x				
3M Vflex 1805	N95		x				
Alpha protech	N95		x				
Cardinal Health	N95				x		
Gerson 1730	N95		x				
Kimberly Clark PFR-95	N95	x	x	x	x	x	x
Moldex 1512	N95		x				
Moldex 1712	N95		x				
Moldex 2200	N95	x	x	x	x	x	
Moldex 2201	N95	x	x	x	x	x	x
Precept 65-3395	N95		x				
Prestige Ameritech RP88020	N95		x				
Sperian HC-NB095	N95		x				
Sperian HC-NB295	N95		x				
U.S. Safety AD2N95A	N95		x				
U.S. Safety AD4N95A	N95		x				
3M 8293	P100	x	x	x			
Moldex 2360	P100	x	x				
North 8150	P100	x	x				

Vaporous hydrogen peroxide, ultraviolet germicidal irradiation, and moist heat are the most promising decontamination methods. If FFR decontamination is considered, these methods do not appear to break down filtration or compromise the FFR; however, many of these methods can only be used for limited times.

Decontamination methods that are not recommended by CDC because they changed the FFR performance or function include; autoclaving, dry heat, isopropyl alcohol, soap, dry microwave irradiation and bleach.

Please note CDC and NIOSH do not recommend that FFRs be decontaminated and then reused as standard care. This practice would be inconsistent with their approved use, but they understand in times of crisis, this option may need to be considered when FFR shortages exist. Specific decontamination methods and research is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).