

## Reusable Respirators (Elastomeric Respirators and envo<sup>®</sup>masks) Frequently Asked Questions for Staff

### General

#### **Why does BILH expect staff who meet the appropriate criteria for a reusable respirator to use it as their primary respirator instead of a disposable respirator?**

BILH is committed to providing appropriate, safe PPE for all our staff. Reusable respirators provide safe protection, can be easily cleaned, and are a sustainable choice as demand for disposable respirators remains high and the supply chain is unstable. ***Staff members who are successfully fit tested to a reusable respirator (envo<sup>®</sup>mask or elastomeric respirator) should use it as their primary respirator in non-sterile environments (not an operating room or cardiac catheterization lab).***

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommend using reusable respirators in the health care setting to augment the total supply of respirators available. In alignment with this strategy, BILH has added reusable respirators to its PPE supply to help preserve disposable N95 respirators for staff in areas in which reusable respirators cannot be used.

#### **Why have some staff been fit tested for a reusable respirator and some have not?**

The CDC and NIOSH strongly recommend against the use of respirators with exhalation valves in sterile areas, even if covered by a surgical mask. Therefore, staff who work in these areas (such as an operating room, labor and delivery unit, or cardiac catheterization lab), even for part of their work, were not fit tested to reusable respirators during the BILH Fall 2020 Fit Testing Program.

#### **Can I bring my own respirator for use during work shifts?**

BILH does not support the use of personally purchased PPE because the fit, filtration and durability cannot be verified. All BILH-provided PPE has been evaluated by BILH Environmental Health and Safety staff and many respirators have been sent to an outside laboratory for additional testing. Counterfeit respirators are common in the current marketplace and are not safe for use. Although staff may own a similar brand of respirator to the one that BILH will provide, they may not use them in a BILH facility due to safety and quality concerns.

### Supplies

#### **Is BILH experiencing a shortage of disposable respirators?**

No, we are not currently experiencing a shortage of disposable respirators, but the supply chain is not stable enough to ensure that the brands used at BILH will consistently be available. We are managing our inventory and ongoing product supply chain in a way that both meets current usage demands and allows us to be prepared for increased needs created by another possible surge in COVID-19 cases. The use of both reusable and disposable respirators allows us to optimize the utilization of our supply.

**Is BILH experiencing a shortage of surgical masks?**

No, we are not experiencing a shortage of surgical masks at BILH and the stability of the supply chain has improved. BILH Supply Chain continues to monitor our supply and purchase additional surgical masks.

**Where can I receive a new respirator?**

Respirator distribution is unique to each hospital. Contact your manager, who will coordinate with their local supply chain leader.

**Where can I receive additional supplies for use with respirators (e.g., 3-D printed ear protectors, filters)?**

Staff needing additional supplies for their respirators should contact their manager, who will coordinate with their local supply chain leader. BILH Supply Chain continues to monitor the inventory and purchase respirator supplies. Staff are advised to obtain supplies through BILH and not to purchase them on their own.

**How often do I need to change reusable respirator filters?**

Envo<sup>®</sup>mask filters should be changed after one shift/day. Elastomeric respirator filters should be changed annually. If a filter becomes soiled, torn or wet, it should be discarded and replaced. Please see [BILH Respirator Service Life by Respirator Type](#) for details.

**Additional PPE to Wear with a Reusable Respirator**

**Can an exhalation plug be used for the envo<sup>®</sup>mask?**

Exhalation valve plugs should not be utilized at this time. NIOSH is in the process of testing the safety and efficacy of exhalation valves and plugs for the protection of those around you. For now, you should cover your envo<sup>®</sup>mask or elastomeric respirator with a surgical mask.

**Do I need to wear a surgical mask over my reusable respirator?**

Yes, a surgical mask should be worn over both the envo<sup>®</sup>mask and elastomeric respirators due to the presence of an exhalation valve.

**Education**

**Where can I find a training refresher on how to use a reusable respirator?**

All staff fit tested for a reusable respirator were trained how to use them as part of fit testing. If you need a refresher, talk to your manager or review training materials on the [BILH COVID-19 Staff Resources website](#) under the [Clinical Resources](#) in the BILH Fit Testing and Training Materials section.