



MASKS AND RESPIRATORS EXPLAINED

What is the difference and what is each option used for?

Both respirators and masks are single use devices that create a physical barrier between the mouth and the nose of the wearer and the environment around them. There are a variety of options available out there, and a lot of uncertainty on what purpose each one serves. We're breaking it down for you here in simple terms.

There are four categories of respirators and masks, each of which has its own subcategories: general purpose masks, surgical or medical masks, general N95 respirator masks and surgical N95 respirator masks.

General purpose masks and surgical masks are designed to help prevent biological particles like bacteria and viruses from being expelled by the wearer into the environment around them. Both are loose fitting.



BOTH GENERAL PURPOSE MASKS AND SURGICAL MASKS HELP STOP PARTICLES FROM GETTING OUT

General purpose masks can be made from a variety of materials and are intended for the general public to help keep germs from getting out. These are the majority of what we're selling at Fairware. They have no medical benefit and are not intended to prevent, treat or mitigate disease. They are single use masks, but most can be washed and re-used. Some general purpose masks have pockets where a filter can be inserted for extra protection. Learn how to make your own filter [here](#).

Surgical masks are intended to provide protection for patients from fluids being expelled by healthcare workers. They're made in various thicknesses, each providing different levels of protection. There are two categories of surgical masks: general non-surgical medical masks, which are not intended for surgery, but intended to be worn around hospitals; and surgical masks, which are intended for surgery and are required to meet higher standards. Both types of surgical masks are intended for a single use. They should not be washed or re-used.

Conversely, respirators are designed to help reduce the wearer's exposure to airborne particles like dust, mist, fumes, fibers, viruses and bacteria.

There are two main types of respirators: general N95 respirators and surgical N95 respirators. Both are single use products, and should not be washed or re-used.

General N95 respirators are typically designed for contractors, filtering out at least 95% of small particles, and are not considered a medical respirator mask.



GENERAL N95 RESPIRATOR MASKS HELP STOP PARTICLES FROM GETTING IN

Surgical N95 respirators are intended for medical use, as they filter out at least 95% of small particles *and* help prevent biological particles from being expelled by the wearer. Both N95 respirators are tight fitting to create a seal between the user's face and the respirator.



SURGICAL N95 RESPIRATOR MASKS HELP STOP PARTICLES FROM GETTING IN OR OUT



OVERVIEW

	General Purpose Mask	Surgical or Medical Mask	General N95 Respirator Mask	Surgical N95 Respirator Mask
Designed to prevent biological particles from being expelled by the wearer into the environment	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Designed to help protect the wearer from exposure to airborne particles	No	No	Yes	Yes
Provides a minimum 95% filtration efficiency against small particles	No	No	Yes	Yes
Designed to fit tightly to the face and create a seal between the user's face and the respirator	No	No	Yes	Yes
Designed for healthcare and provides medical benefit	No	Yes	No	Yes
Cleared by the U.S. FDA as a surgical mask	No	Yes	No	Yes
Resistant to fluids	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fairware product	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

At Fairware, we have several personal protection equipment (PPE) items available, such as hand sanitizer, soap, gloves, gowns, acrylic safety shields and social distancing floor decals. Most masks we have to offer are general purpose masks, but we also have surgical masks and general N95 respirator masks available.

Please refer to an applicable occupational health authority such as the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), [Health Canada](#), [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) or your local health authority for guidance on best practices in relation to COVID-19.

[VIEW OUR PPE PRODUCTS](#)

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