

## Respirator Masks

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**We have a staff member who mixes chemotherapy who is having a hard time getting fitted for a respirator mask. Can you recommend a respirator mask for people who are difficult to fit?**

Some procedures that involve handling chemotherapy or hazardous drugs (HDs), such as decontamination of the biological safety cabinet or HD spill clean up, require the use of a particulate respirator mask. A particulate respirator mask is suitable for use with HDs if it is NIOSH-approved and has a rating of N95 or greater. There are three kinds of particulate respirator masks available:

- Disposable or filtering face piece respirator with built in filters
- Reusable or elastomeric respirator mask with filter attachments
- Powered Air Purifying Respirator (PAPR) masks

Disposable or filtering face piece respirators require fit testing while elastomeric and PAPR masks do not. A staff member who is having trouble getting fitted for a disposable/filtering face piece respirator has a couple of options:

1. Try a different brand. There is more than one brand of disposable/filtering face piece respirator (i.e., Kimberly-Clark and 3M) and they tend to fit differently.
2. Obtain one of the respirator masks that do not require fit testing. This is a good option for staff members with facial hair (i.e., beards) that make them difficult to fit. Note that these are larger masks that require cleaning of non-disposable parts.

### Reference

BC Cancer Agency Provincial Pharmacy Directive VI-30: Personal Protective Equipment. July 31, 2013.