



The Tennessee Department of Health has provided the following guidance regarding the conditions under which an N95 mask should be utilized by school nurses:

- N95 masks should be worn when there is potential for aerosolization of respiratory secretions.
- N95 masks should only be worn after appropriate fit testing. Without fit testing, an N95 mask is equivalent to a surgical mask.
- The use of nebulized medications, which may aerosolize respiratory secretions, in school clinics is discouraged. Patients should provide a metered dose inhaler (MDI) with spacer and mask whenever possible. Medications provided via MDI with spacer and mask have been shown to be as effective as nebulized medications and do not pose the risk of aerosolization seen with nebulized medications.
- The CDC considers a surgical mask worn with a face shield, gloves and gown to provide sufficient protection to healthcare workers unless performing aerosolizing or surgical procedures.
- School nurses who care for students or staff who require suctioning (e.g., some patients with cerebral palsy or other neuromuscular disorder that results in poor control of secretions, individuals with tracheostomies that require routine suctioning, etc.) should be fit-tested for an N95 mask.
- Surgical masks provide adequate protection to school nurses who do not routinely care for students or staff requiring suctioning or other aerosolizing procedures.

TOSHA Regulations

Here is the link to the respiratory protection standard that TOSHA enforces:

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134>

Here is a link to a compliance guide created by Federal OSHA,

<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/3384small-entity-for-respiratory-protection-standard-rev.pdf> the checklists in each section may be useful for whomever is administering the

respiratory protection program. To help contain costs, the standard permits physicians or other licensed health care providers (PLHCPs) to utilize the questionnaire located in Appendix C of the guide. Some respirator manufacturer's (3M for example) use this to provide the medical evaluation for approximately \$30.

Where N95's are worn on a *voluntary* basis, the requirements are simply that the employer provide a copy of Appendix D to the respiratory protection standard:

<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134AppD>

Local entities such as hospitals, fire departments, and emergency medical services (EMS) have established respiratory programs that may be able to assist schools with establishing their own programs. Please contact Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce with questions, 800-249-8510 (ask to speak with an industrial hygienist) or email Assistant Coordinator, Larry Hunt at Larry.Hunt@tn.gov.