**Mask Types: Recommendations for Campus**

From a Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) perspective, N-95 use is only required in situations where there is a high probability that an infected individual is present and undergoing procedures that cause extended exposure at close contact. These activities mainly occur in healthcare settings. For general situations, face coverings have proven to be an effective tool for reducing COVID-19 transmissions.

KN-95s are the Chinese equivalent to the N-95, but do not have to meet United States testing standards. Also, there have been reports of significant issues with counterfeit masks and difficulty in fit testing. For these reasons, KN-95s are not recommended for use when a respirator is needed.

The N-95 mask is considered a respirator and certain conditions must be met before use to ensure the wearer has the proper training to achieve an effective seal under all use conditions and has demonstrated the ability to wear a respirator. For an N-95 to be effective, it must produce a tight seal and when it does, some individuals may have difficulty breathing through the mask for extended periods. In addition, depending on the shape of the face and whether facial hair is present, obtaining a tight seal may not be possible. Without a tight seal, N-95s offer protection generally on the same level as some cloth and medical type masks.

Multilayer cloth and medical procedure type masks have proven to be effective barriers reducing the number of respiratory droplets emitted from its wearer. Secondarily, a mask covering the nose and mouth also reduces the number of droplets the wearer breaths in. Studies conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have shown that the effectiveness of common masks in protecting the wearer can be enhanced and approach the protectiveness of N-95’s ([CDC Maximizing Mask Performance Study](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7007e1.htm?s_cid=mm7007e1_w)). They found when a multilayer cotton mask was placed over a medical procedure mask (i.e., double masking) the sealing of the masks improved reducing the wearers exposure by over 90%.

If faculty, staff, or students believe the work they are performing, or activities they are involved, require the use of a respirator, they should contact Pat Walker Health Center at 479-575-4451 or Environmental Health and Safety at 479-575-5448.