



Direct Care Staff,

As you have seen from several recent communications, the nation continues to experience personal protective equipment (PPE) shortages. Of particular interest to us is the lack of available N95 respirator face masks, which are to be used with positive COVID-19 patients.

On March 25 we updated you that the CDC has indicated it is permissible to use masks not evaluated or approved by NIOSH. As a reminder, the use of an N95/respirator mask is only necessary for confirmed or pending test results COVID-19 patients. As we continue to explore all of our supply inventory avenues, we have identified the ability to purchase KN95 respirator masks. These KN95 masks are respirators certified as meeting the N95 standards and can be expected to function very similarly to one another. We have placed an order for 50,000 of these KN95 respirator masks and will distribute these to our team members accordingly. Below are some reminders and good information about the use of respirator masks during this national shortage (KN95, N95, N99, N100s etc...):

- Respirator masks such as N95s and KN95s require the employee who is going to wear one to be fit tested initially and annually.
 - The Dept. of Labor is currently waiving the annual requirement for the fit testing due to national shortages.
 - The initial fit testing is still a requirement.
 - Therefore, if you/your employee has never been fit tested, they would have to be fit tested before using one of these masks.

- We have several fit testing kits across our organization. In the event your location does not have one, and cannot borrow one from another Elara Caring location nearby, many locations have had great success with their local Occupational Health clinics in getting their staff sent in for fit testing. Below are a few examples, but, if these clinics are not in your area, please work with your supervisor to find an Occupational Health clinic nearby.
 - Concentra
 - Please notify Ian Gordon if there are any issues with obtaining testing at Concentra.
 - Health Express

- Extended use and reuse of respirators is currently permissible. See the policy sent out on March 26 titled: GUIDANCE FOR EXTENDED USE AND LIMITED RESUE OF N95 FILTERING FACEPIECE RESPIRATORS. Below are some specific points to remember:
 - Discard respirators following use during aerosol generating procedures.
 - Discard respirators contaminated with blood, respiratory or nasal secretions, or other bodily fluids from patients.
 - Use a cleanable face shield (preferred) or a surgical mask (can be homemade) over a respirator and/or other steps (e.g., masking patients, use of engineering controls), when feasible to reduce surface contamination of the respirator.
 - Hang used respirators in a designated storage area or keep them in a clean, breathable container such as a paper bag between uses. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching or adjusting the respirator (if necessary, for comfort or to maintain fit).
 - Avoid touching the inside of the respirator. If inadvertent contact is made with the inside of the respirator, perform hand hygiene as described above.
 - Follow the manufacturer's user instructions, including conducting a user seal check.
 - Discard any respirator that is obviously damaged or becomes hard to breathe through.

We hope this information will assist you as we continue to see the numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases climb across the United States, and these patients require care in their home settings.