

## **2. Medical masks**

### **2.1 Fluid repellent surgical face masks (FRSM) and disposable respirators (FFP3/ FFP2/ N95)**

This excludes re-usable respirators, that can be re-used according to manufacturer's instructions.

FFP3/FFP2/N95 respirators have a large capacity for the filtration and retention of airborne contaminants. Sessional use or re-use over the course of a day in health or social care, would not approach anywhere near that capacity.

#### **Sessional use**

The use of masks for one HCW to use in one work area. This is currently recommended in the UK Infection Prevention and Control guidance.

- it should be disposed of if it becomes moist, damaged, visibly soiled
- the duration (number of hours) of sessional use is dependent on local (for example, heat, activity length, shift-length) and individual factors. In practice, this may vary from 2 to 6 hours
- if masks are touched or adjusted, hand hygiene should be performed immediately
- if the mask is removed for any reason (for example, upon exiting the ward area, taking a break or completing a shift), they are disposed of as clinical waste, unless they can be safely reused as outlined below

## **Resuse**

Important requirements are as follows:

- the mask should be removed and discarded if soiled, damaged, or hard to breathe through
- masks with elastic ear hooks should be re-used (tie-on face masks are less suitable because they are more difficult to remove)
- hand hygiene should be performed before removing the face mask
- face masks should be carefully folded so the outer surface is held inward and against itself to reduce likely contact with the outer surface during storage
- the folded mask should be stored between uses in a clean sealable bag/ box which is marked with the person's name and is then properly stored in a well-defined place
- hand hygiene should be performed after removing the face mask
- some models of PPE cannot be physically reused as they deform once being donned and do not go back to original condition (meaning it would be difficult to re-don and achieve a fit check). Fit checks should be performed each time a respirator is donned if it is reused

## **Alternatives to standard PPE**

There is insufficient evidence to consider homemade masks or cloth masks in health and care settings.