

# Nurse Alert: Report All Issues with Decontaminated N95 Respirators

National Nurses United has evaluated available evidence on decontamination methods for N95 filtering facepiece respirators and determined that **NO METHOD** is both safe and effective.

*For an N95 decontamination method to be safe and effective, it must meet three criteria*

- ▶ 1. It must effectively inactivate the pathogen.
- ▶ 2. It must not degrade the performance of the respirator including filtration, structural integrity, and face seal.
- ▶ 3. It must not introduce an additional hazard to the worker wearing the respirator.

**All the decontamination methods that we've researched have failed at least one of these.**

**What nurses need to know if your employer plans to or is currently decontaminating disposable N95 respirators:**

**RIGHT TO KNOW** You have the right to be adequately informed by your employer of the type of decontamination method used, including instructions and information which outline the specific decontamination procedures. This applies whether your employer is conducting decontamination onsite or has outsourced to another company (e.g., Battelle or STERIS). A fact sheet that provides information on potential adverse health effects of the method used should also be provided to you.

**RIGHT TO REPORT** You have the right to report any adverse health effects from wearing decontaminated N95 respirators. This includes:

- Signs and symptoms associated with off-gassing from chemical used in decontamination. Hydrogen peroxide vapor is one of the most common chemicals used. Signs and symptoms of hydrogen peroxide vapor exposure include upper airway irritation, shortness of breath, sensation of burning or tightness in the chest, skin irritation, hypersensitivity to odors, and other nonspecific symptoms such as nausea, fatigue, and headache, and should immediately be reported.
- Any signs and symptoms of potential infection with SARS-CoV-2 and/or respiratory infection should be reported to your employer immediately.
- Any respirator with signs of discoloration or other signs of degradation such as strap breakage, improper fit, face-seal leakage, and delaminated nose-foam should be discarded and reported to your employer.

Battelle and STERIS decontamination systems that have been given emergency use authorization by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are required to provide weekly reports to the FDA of any problems or adverse events **that they are aware of**. Issues that these companies do not report will be overlooked by the FDA.

**Report adverse events**, including problems with test performance or results, to MedWatch by submitting the online FDA Form 3500 (<https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/medwatch/index.cfm?action=reporting>.home) or by calling 1-800-FDA-1088.

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