

Jeff Boer

From: Brian Ledley <bledley@pmhnet.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 10, 2020 10:56 PM
To: staff@pmhnet.com
Subject: [STAFF] COVID Task Force Updates
Attachments: mask.pdf

Good evening everyone,

Here are a few updates from the COVID-19 Pandemic Task Force:

1. We are seeing masks being turned in for disinfection that are heavily covered in makeup. Because some types of makeup contain sunblock, and our process for disinfection utilizes UV lights, we are unable to determine if masks are properly being disinfected. Masks deemed to be heavily covered in makeup will be thrown away. We need to conserve PPE as much as possible, so please be mindful of that when applying makeup each morning.
2. Please see the attached file about N95 masks with one-way valves. It is important to note that masks with one-way valves do a great job at stopping droplets from being inhaled in by the mask wearer; it DOES NOT, however, stop droplets being exhaled. We are now asking anyone who comes into the hospital wearing an N95 mask with a valve to either cover their mask with one of our cloth masks, or to replace their mask with one of our cloth masks. This information is also important when out in public. While this type of mask is great at protecting the wearer (provided it has been properly fit tested), it does not protect others. In fact, the valve can funnel the exhaled air, causing it to be more concentrated.
3. PMH is in the process of completing the necessary paperwork and documentation for a HIPAA violation. While the violation was accidental in nature, it never the less occurred. It is CRUCIAL that we not disclose Patient Health Information (PHI). With the COVID-19 Pandemic, we are dealing with some new scenarios that we have not seen before. However, it is critical to note that **NO HIPAA Laws** have changed. We cannot share, with anyone, results from individuals who have been tested for the virus. This includes the patient's employer. If you have any questions regarding PHI, please speak with your manager or Peg Madsen, Chief Patient Administration Officer.
4. Beginning tomorrow, May 11th, more of the state's business are able to open with restrictions. This includes beauty shops and restaurants. As part of Governor Holcomb's Executive Order slowly reopening the state, businesses are required to provide to their associates and post publicly what steps the business is taking to ensure the health and safety of their staff and the public. Hospitals are not exempt from this Executive Order. The Order mandates that all businesses open must provide and post those steps by the end of the day tomorrow (May 11th). PMH will comply with the Executive Order, so we therefore ask that you please check your email or speak with your manager for a copy of that document.

Thanks,
Brian

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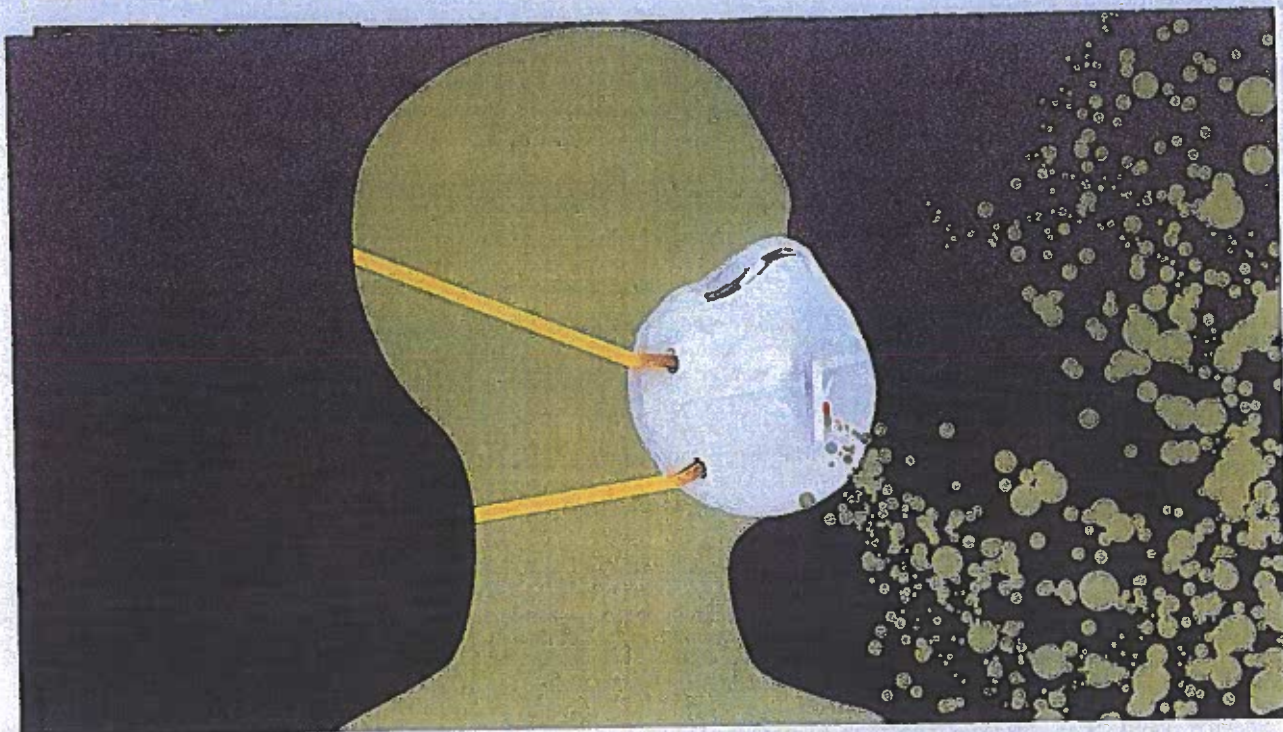


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What is a mask valve, and why are cities banning them?

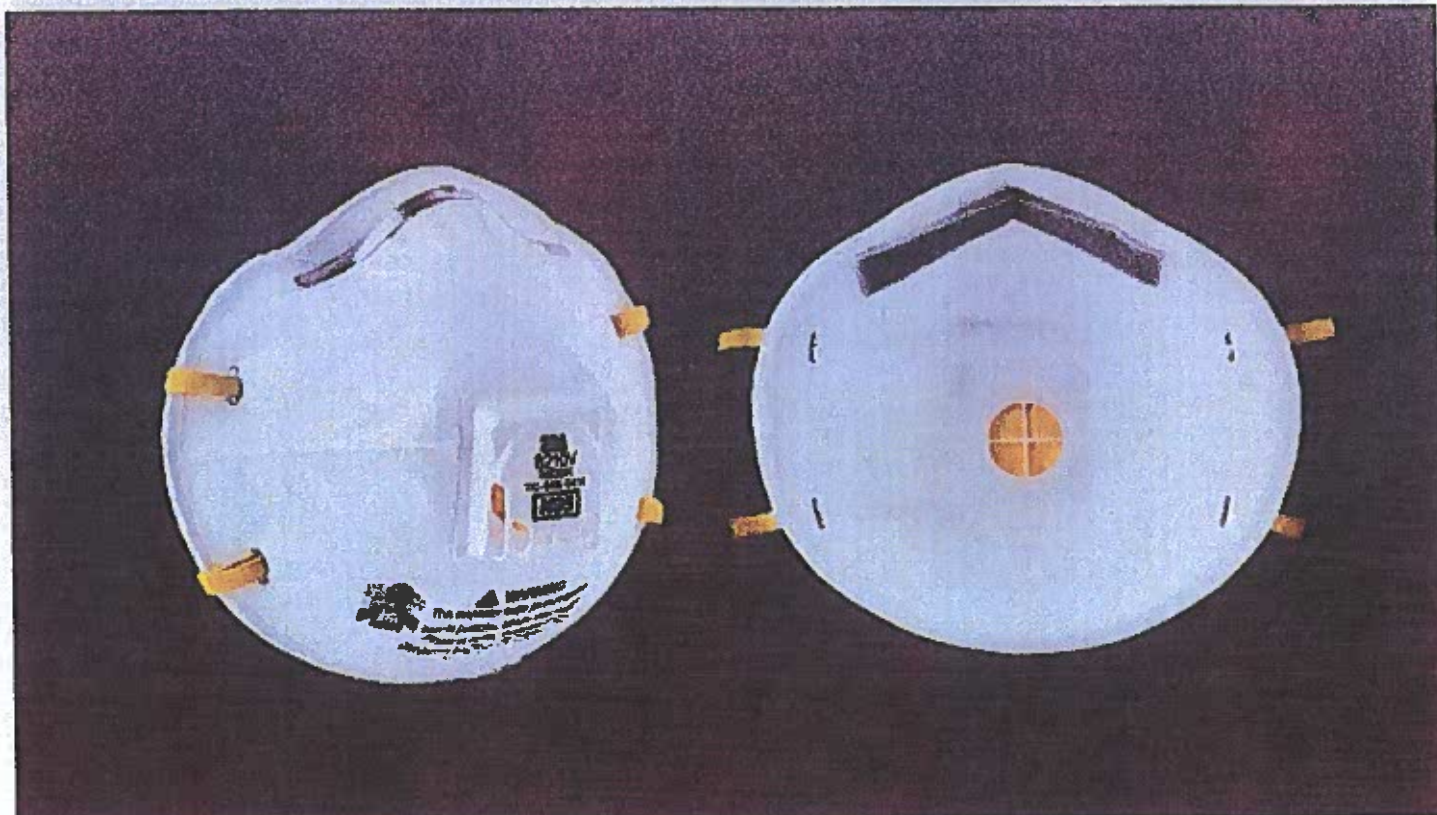
Valves will keep you more comfortable, but endanger those around you.



Let us explain.

WHAT IS A MASK VALVE?

Some masks and respirators have a little plastic piece embedded in the fabric. It's a one-way valve. That means it closes when you breathe in, so pathogens can't get in through it. But when you breathe out, this valve opens, creating a doorway for your exhalation to leave the mask.



[Photos: 3M]

WHY DO PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICIALS CARE?

When you wear a mask with a valve, a significant portion of your exhalations are entirely unfiltered. A normal cotton mask is far from perfect at capturing virus particles that you might inhale or exhale. (Surgical masks were originally invented to protect patients from coughing and sneezing, not pathogens from the air!) But when you add the valve, you aren't even filtering your breath with cotton. Your mouth is essentially an open exhaust.

WHY DO ANY MASKS HAVE VALVES IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Surgical masks have been around for over 100 years, and they weren't designed with valves. The N95 respirator is a relatively new invention, introduced in the 1970s, and it was brought to market largely in response to a need in industrial America rather than medicine.

So an N95 mask comes in two flavors, with and without valves.

Early respirators were designed to be used in factories and coal mines. They filtered particulate matter, aka dust, from the air that would be harmful to breathe in. But wearing a respirator can be a miserable experience. It traps heat and vapor from your mouth. That's why these industrial respirators had valves, so that it kept the wearer cooler and more comfortable while working a long shift. Nikki McCullough, an occupational health and safety leader at 3M, explained to me last month. If people were to breathe out flu germs in a coal mine, the coal would be just fine!

To this day, industrial N95 respirators have valves. Hardware stores sell N95s with valves (or they did when they were in stock) to the public for home improvement projects. And so a lot of the respirators out there have valves. (At the same time, many mask companies have added valves to their designs in response to COVID-19, presumably to distinguish their products.)

WHEN HOSPITALS ADOPTED N95 RESPIRATORS, DID THOSE VERSIONS HAVE VALVES?

No. N95s were historically used in factories, but in the 1990s, with the rise of AIDS and a related outbreak of tuberculosis, doctors were looking for a new level of airborne protection, since tuberculosis is highly contagious through the air. That's when the medical community bought into N95s and created its own standards for these respirators. The big difference? The medical community mandated no valves, so healthcare workers didn't get the people around them sick.

To this day, the CDC recommends hospitals not use N95s with valves. "Respirators with exhalation valves should not be used in situations where a sterile field must be maintained (e.g., during an invasive procedure in an operating or procedure room) because the exhalation valve allows unfiltered exhaled air to escape into the sterile field," it writes.

SO IS IT OK TO WEAR MY MASK WITH A VALVE IF IT'S LEGAL IN MY AREA?

Not really! Yes, if you have a mask with a valve, you are protecting yourself as well as you would be if you wore a mask without a valve. There's no difference in personal protection according to anything published in the CDC or elsewhere. But if you have a mask with a valve, you're not really protecting those around you, which is at least half of the point of wearing a cotton mask in the first place.

The reason we all need to wear masks is that we can all be infected with COVID-19 and not know it for weeks before showing symptoms, if at all. Doctors have also tracked occasions where people have tested positive, negative, and then positive again. There is clearly a whole lot we don't know about COVID-19. But given that we're reaching the consensus that this pandemic can spread through the air, your mask should treat filtering as a two-way street.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Wilson is a senior writer at Fast Company who has written about design, technology, and culture for almost 15 years. His work has appeared at Gizmodo, Kotaku, PopMech, PopSci, Esquire, American Photo and Lucky Peach. More