

HSE advises on the importance of fitting RPE correctly

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is advising healthcare workers currently using respiratory protective equipment (RPE) on the importance of ensuring it is fitted correctly. A respirator that is incorrectly fitted will not protect the wearer.

Tight-fitting respirators rely on having a good seal with the wearer's face. It is vital that before using a respirator for the first time, or before using a different brand of respirator, wearers pass a [fit test](#) for the model and size of respirator they are going to use. This is to make sure the equipment fits to their particular facial characteristics.

In these unprecedented times, to protect front line health care workers and reduce the risk of transmission during the coronavirus outbreak, if support is required in carrying out a fit test, it should be done following government advice on [social distancing](#). This means making sure instructions are delivered verbally and observations are made from a distance of two metres (6ft) where possible. If closer observation is required, those being fitted should keep their respirator on to minimise the risk of transmission.

Once the wearer has been fit tested for the model of respirator they intend to use, they must ensure they have put it on correctly to protect themselves and others. Wearers should follow three simple steps: R-P-E

Read the guidance

HSE has [step-by-step guidance](#) on the correct way to fit the respirator and carry out a fit check. Wearers must familiarise themselves with the guidance and follow the manufacturer's instructions when fitting their equipment.

Put your respirator on using a mirror

When fitting a respirator, wearers must make sure the straps are in the correct place and are not twisted or crossed over. The easiest way to do this is using a mirror.

Ensure your own safety

Dr David Fishwick, Chief Medical Adviser for HSE and respiratory physician said: "Before entering the workplace, wearers must carry out a fit check to ensure their respirator is on correctly. This allows the wearer to check they are experiencing no leakage around the face seal, and that they have put the respirator on correctly."

Andrew Curran, Chief Scientific Adviser for HSE said: "Ensuring RPE is put on correctly is crucial. Any gaps between the wearer's face and the mask face seal, whether through incorrect moulding of the nose clip or by facial hair, will compromise the protection of the wearer."

“Users must ensure they have been fit tested for the size and model of respirator they are going to use, and that they carry out a fit check each time RPE is used.”

For further information, see HSE’s related [RPE videos](#). You can also [sign up to our newsletter](#) to receive updates and ongoing information.

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. For further information, see HSE’s [guidance on coronavirus](#)

The post [HSE advises on the importance of fitting RPE correctly](#) appeared first on [HSE Media Centre](#).