

Waste Not, Want Not: Re-usability of N95 Masks

Cotton masks offer little protection against COVID-19. The N95 mask is comprised of microfiber polypropylene that has been permanently electrostatically charged creating a superior filter.¹

COVID-19
can
survive
for...

24 hrs

on card
board

48 hrs

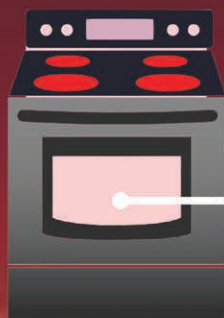
on metal

72
hrs

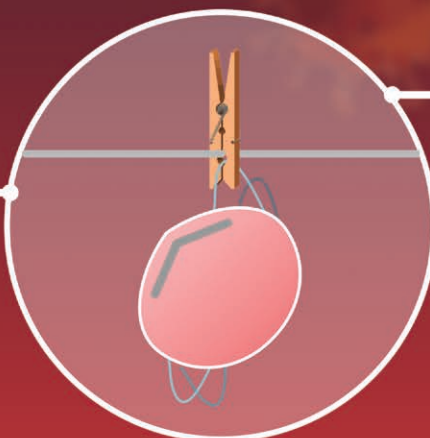
on plastic

Alternatively, heat the mask to

70° C (158° F) X 30 min



Liquid disinfectants like
alcohol and bleach can
damage the mask.

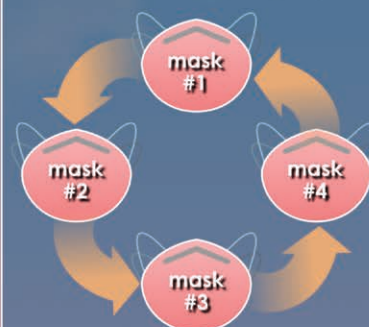


Hang the mask by a clip and do
NOT let it touch the metal of the
oven (which is much hotter and
will degrade the mask).



Exposure to UV light may
degrade the mask but
further evaluation of this
technique is forthcoming.

An N95 mask can be
reused by allowing it
to dry thoroughly



Keeping the mask in a DRY
environment for 3-4 days
ensures the virus will not survive.
Cycle through 4 masks in series,
one for each day, then repeat.

New information is emerging almost daily and clinicians should stay up to date with recommendations from manufacturers, the CDC, and their local medical center.

As the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) illnesses continues to escalate amidst a substandard supply of protective equipment for health care providers, the question of extended use or reuse of N95 masks has emerged. As well, the relative effectiveness of the N95 compared to other mask types has been entertained. A recent article by Abd-Elsayed and Karri¹ aim to put these topics into focus. In addition, personal correspondence between Drs Richard Prielipp (University of Minnesota Department of Anesthesiology) and Peter Tsai (inventor of the N95 mask) offers perspectives on managing the reuse of this central element of protective equipment.

The Infographic is composed by Naveen Nathan, MD, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine (n-nathan@northwestern.edu). Illustration by Naveen Nathan, MD.

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

REFERENCE

1. Abd-Elsayed A, Karri J. Utility of substandard face mask options for health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Anesth Analg*. 2020;XXX:XXX.