

Outdoor smoke – use of P2 / N95 masks

Disposable P2 / N95 face masks (also known as respirators) are designed to filter out PM_{2.5} particles, including PM_{2.5} particles from bushfire smoke.

For a P2 / N95 mask to be effective it must be worn correctly to achieve an air-tight seal around the face. Men need to be clean-shaven to wear a P2 mask correctly. They do not provide complete protection and are not designed to be used for extended periods of time.

P2 / N95 masks are only available in adult sizes and will not fit most children aged less than 12 years. Making modifications to adult masks to fit them to children is not recommended.

Wearing a mask is not an alternative to taking measures to avoid exposure to smoke outdoors. Where possible, people should avoid smoke by staying indoors with the windows and doors shut.

Masks are most useful when used for short periods of time when exposure to outdoor smoke cannot be avoided due to individual circumstances. Masks should only be used indoors in exceptional circumstances.

Wearing a P2 / N95 mask can make it harder to breathe and may increase the risk of heat-related illness during hot weather. **ACT Health recommends that people with lung conditions, such as chronic obstructive airways disease, asthma or emphysema, and people with chronic heart conditions, should seek advice from their medical practitioner prior to using these masks.**

Advice for fitting a P2 / N95 mask correctly

1. Remove glasses and hats. Tie back long hair so it does not become tangled in the straps of the mask
2. Put the mask on your face, ensuring the nose piece is at the top of the mask
3. Place the top strap or tie high on the back of your head
4. Move the bottom strap over your head and position it below your ears
5. Compress the mask against the face to ensure a seal across the bridge of the nose
6. Compress the mask to ensure a seal across the cheeks and the face

7. Gently exhale and check air does not escape around the seal. Adjust if necessary.
8. Gently inhale and check the mask is drawn in towards the face and there are no air leaks around the face seal. Adjust as necessary.
9. If there are air leaks that can't be rectified by adjusting the mask, check the mask for defects or try another style of P2 / N95 mask.

Additional information on correct use of P2 / N95 masks

- People with facial hair (including a 1-2 day beard growth) may not be able to achieve an adequate seal between the mask and the wearer's face.
- If you have a chronic lung or heart condition, seek advice from your medical practitioner before using a mask.
- If you feel dizzy, faint or out of breath while wearing a P2 / N95 mask, remove it and go to a place with better air quality and seek medical attention.
- If the mask becomes damaged, soiled, moist or contaminated it should be removed and replaced.
- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for specific advice on checking the fit of the individual brands of masks.
- To remain effective masks must be changed regularly, in line with the manufacturer's instructions.

Accessibility

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