



## Using respirators with exhalation valves during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Respirators with exhalation valves** do provide the same level of protection to the wearer as one that does not have a valve; however, they are not recommended to be used as part of COVID-19 precautions because they may not filter virus particles or respiratory droplets that the wearer exhales. This means droplets from the wearer can be released outside the mask, reducing the efficacy of the barrier mask as a COVID-19 public health prevention measure. These exhalation valves are intended to make the respirator more comfortable for the person who is wearing it.

**Source control:** Respirators with exhalation valves protect the wearer from the virus that causes COVID-19. However, they may not prevent the spread of the virus from the wearer to others (that is, they may not be effective for source control).

If possible, wear a respirator **without** an exhalation valve when both source control and respiratory protection are required.

If you must use a respirator with an exhalation valve, the following must be considered:



When **working alone**, wearing a fit tested respirator with an exhalation valve is acceptable.



When **source control** is needed: If working in an environment where others are **not** wearing respirators (e.g., fit tested NIOSH approved disposable filtering facepiece N95, an elastomeric respirator), cover the exhalation valve with a medical mask (e.g., surgical mask, procedure mask) that does not interfere with the respirator fit.

Medical grade masks must be worn if physical distancing cannot be consistently maintained.

For the latest information of COVID-19 and the use of masks, please refer to Chapter 6 of the University COVID-19 General Workplace Guidelines: <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/covid-19-information/>

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirator-use-faq.html>