# How To Extend the Life of Respiratory Protection

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<th>Recommended Best Practice</th>
<th>Minimum Acceptable Protection</th>
<th>Last Resort</th>
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| **When Respirator Supplies Are Low**                           | • Use a surgical mask OVER the N95 to extend its use. Replace the surgical mask between patients.  
• Use emergency rule to allow for an air purifying respirator (APR)/powered air purifying respirator (PAPR) canister interchangeability.  
• Use masks beyond their expiration date.*                                                                 | • Consider reusing your filtering facepiece respirator (FFR). Store in non-plastic bag between uses.  
• Consider reusing your APR/PAPR canisters — wipe outside down (do not spray) with disinfectant and store in humidity-free environment. **DO NOT SPRAY FILTER MEDIA** | • Prioritize protection by exposure risk:  
  • > 6’ from patient = no mask  
  • 3’-6’ = surgical mask  
  • < 3’ = N95 or greater                                                                                      |
| **When Respirator Supplies Are Depleted**                      | • Decontaminate FFPs and reuse (do not share FFPs and APR/PAPR filters between people – maintain FFPs for individuals).  
  • Microwave for 2 minutes at 1100-1250W. Place FFP on container containing 50 mL of water to generate steam.  
  • Ultraviolet Germicidal Irradiation (UGVI) for 15 minutes on each side using a device fitted with a 40W UV-C bulb. | • Use surgical face masks with priority given to those meeting ASTM F2100 Level 3 (then Level 2, Level 1, surgical molded utility masks and, finally utility masks).  
• Consider adding reusable and cleanable face shields to minimize direct exposure with droplets.       | • Consider homemade respiratory products using common fabric materials (note that the protection level will be minimal, at best).  
• Requires the use of a reusable and cleanable face shield to minimize interaction with droplets.     |


** Do not use your normal cooking microwave. Purchase a new one specific for these needs.  
For details on each approach, see: [https://emergencyresponsetips.com/papers](https://emergencyresponsetips.com/papers).