# Fit Testing 101

For long-term care facilities

*A respirator is a critical defense against respiratory hazards, including COVID-19. A respirator works by filtering air inhaled by its wearer. This filtration is only effective if the seal is complete – if contaminants get* ***around*** *the filter, the wearer is at risk.*

*Fit testing is an important and legally-required precaution for workers that require respirators. Fit testing ensures that the respirator properly seals against the wearer’s face, preventing contaminants from sneaking around the filter.*

# Employers must enact a respiratory protection program

The program has several legally-required components

Fit testing is just one element of worker respiratory protection. [Chapter 296-842](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-842&full=true) of the Washington Administrative Code details an employer’s obligations when workers encounter hazards that require respirator use.

Employer responsibilities include designation of an administrator, regulating voluntary respirator use, maintenance of a written program, record-keeping, medical evaluation, fit testing, and training. Each is a legal requirement.

# Medical evaluation is required before fit testing

Employees must complete a questionnaire to be approved by a licensed health care professional

The person to be fit tested must complete a [medical questionnaire](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-842-22005&pdf=true) prior to fit testing. A licensed health care professional, paid by the employer, must review and approve the questionnaire. Typically, occupational health clinics are able to review and approve medical questionnaires and immediately proceed with fit testing in a single appointment. Employers that self-administer fit testing should contract with an external LHCP for medical evaluations – the employer **must not** review the questionnaire or other privileged medical information from the person to be fit tested.

# Where to get fit tested

How to find qualified fit testers in your area

Fit testing should be performed by a qualified individual and according to a very [specific procedure](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-842&full=true#296-842-22010). Employers may use a third-party company to administer fit tests, or they may be administered by a trained employee.

[Many forms of facial hair](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/pdfs/FacialHairWmask11282017-508.pdf?source=techstories.org) compromise respirator fit. Some workers may have to shave before donning a respirator. Direct employees to shave before fit testing or before respirator use.

## 3rd Party Options

Fit testing is generally performed by occupational medicine clinics. Search for “occupational medicine” or “occupational health” clinics in your area.

The Department of Labor & Industries Medical Provider Network (MPN) is a good place to start your search. Within the [L&I directory](https://secure.lni.wa.gov/provdir/), enter your zip code, hit the “search” button, and use the filters at left to limit your search to “occupational medicine”. *You may also refer to the “Fit testing providers in metro areas” list below.*

## Self-Administration

Employees may be trained to administer fit tests to others. These employees must be [trained](https://www.osha.gov/video/respiratory_protection/fittesting_transcript.html), be properly equipped, and must strictly obey the [procedure set forth in the WAC](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=296-842&full=true#296-842-22010).

Possible options developed by the ALTSA Incident Management Team

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fit- Testing Options** | **Options** | **Option 1** | **Option 2** | **Option 3** |
| **Description** | Blended approach with flexibility(Concentra and National Fit-Testing) | Blended approach with a little less flexibility (Concentra and Northwest Response) | Outpatient and or occupational health clinics only(Concentra and Occupational health) |
| **Outline** | This option provides the most flexibility. Concentra allows walk-in appointments in most of the state, while National Fit Testing trains staff to perform fit testing. | This option provides some flexibility. Walk-in appointment with Concentra and scheduled on-site fit-testing with Northwest Response (NWR) anywhere in the state.  | This option provides flexibility. Walk-in and appointments available Monday thru Friday various times and locations.  |
| **Pros** | * Both have internal providers who review medical evaluations
* National Fit Testing will assist in developing a written respiratory program that will work for all staff to include those getting fit tested by Concentra
* Trained staff who can travel to any location to fit-test.
* Staff can have multiple masks on hand to ensure on the spot
 | * Both have internal providers who review medical evaluations
* NWR has experience fit-testing different types of respirators to include KN95
* NWR can fit test multiple staff at a time
 | * Both have internal providers who review medical evaluations
* Walk-in clinics
* Flexibility for staff might be better
 |
| **Cons** | * Concentra has 19 locations in the state
* Staff must arrive with N95 masks and if they need to fit another one it’s an additional cost (Concentra)
* Need to identify staff who will attend the train the trainer program
 | * Concentra has 19 locations
* Staff must arrive with N95 masks and if they need to fit another one it’s an additional cost (Concentra)
* Need to have an establish Respiratory Protection plan in place (Concentra and Northwest)
* NWR is booked 2 weeks out
 | * Concentra has 19 locations
* Staff must arrive with N95 masks and if they need to fit another one it’s an additional cost (Concentra)
* Need to establish contracts with each Occupational Health Clinic
 |
| **Cost** | Concentra $103 per visitNational Fit-Testing: $905 per training up to three staff, includes fit test machine that last 75-100 test. Purchase additional spray is $25. $27 per medical evaluation | Concentra $103 per visitNWR: Minimum $350 cover 15 fit-tests each additional test is $23 per test if on the same day. Cost for travel and lodging is required for long distance (Central/ Eastern WA) | Concentra $103 per visitOccupation Health Clinics- see above |

# Supply of some respirators is constrained

Continuity is an important consideration

If employees must switch to a new respirator model, they must be fit tested with that model before wearing it in the workplace. Managing inventory is important but difficult right now. Supply of certain respirator models is limited because of the pandemic.

When workers go to be fit tested, we recommend fitting them for several models at once. If one of the models fails the fit test, perhaps another model might work better. Also, in the event that the worker loses access to one model, the worker may switch to another fit-tested model safely.

DSHS has observed that respirators by 3M and Honeywell have become difficult to acquire. We have sourced N95 models from other manufacturers such as BYD, Outdoor Research, and Halyard. We have been encouraged by early fit test results from employees with these respirators. Before purchasing respirators, you may wish to check that your model of interest is [NIOSH-approved](https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/N95list1.html).

# N95 is required when L&I standards indicate high risk of exposure

Refer to Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) guidance for respirator selection

This [L&I document](https://www.lni.wa.gov/agency/_docs/wacoronavirushazardconsiderationsemployers.pdf) is the legal standard for respiratory protection selection during the pandemic. For “high-risk” and “extremely high-risk” work, fit-tested and rated respiratory protection is required. Those that are performing work in “High” and or “Extremely High” risk areas for disease transmission must wear a N95 mask that has been fit-tested per L&I guidelines. See “[Which mask for which task](https://lni.wa.gov/forms-publications/F414-168-000.pdf)”

# Emergency use authorizations

The FDA has approved some KN95 models for use in high-risk work settings

KN95 masks are generally more available and affordable than N95 masks at the moment. The FDA has issued [emergency use authorizations](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19-emergency-use-authorizations-medical-devices/personal-protective-equipment-euas#imported) for some models of KN95 masks, permitting their use in contexts where NIOSH-approved N95 respirators are required. Check the FDA EUA page to see if a KN95 model of interest has received EUA. If so, that model may be used “high-risk” or “extremely high-risk” work settings.

# Fit testing providers in metro areas

This is an incomplete list to help you start a search for local fit testing

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| --- | --- |
| **Area** | **Name** |
| **Statewide** | Northwest Response (NWR)- Mobile253-238-0519<https://northwestresponse.com/wp-content/uploads/Northwest-Response-Respirator-Fit-Testing-1.pdf>  |
| **Statewide** | National Fit-Testing (train the trainer)- Mobile941-400-6722<https://nationalfittestservices.com/> |
| **Spokane** | **Occupational Health Solutions- Clinic**101 W. Cataldo, Suite 100, Spokane, WA 99201(509) 534-6820https://www.ohsolutions.biz/ |
| **Spokane** | **Concentra- Clinic**2005 E 29th Ave, Spokane, WA 99203(509) 747-0770<https://www.concentra.com>  |
| **Yakima** | **Yakima Worker Care- Clinic**409 S 12th Ave, Yakima, WA 98902(509) 575-2949<http://www.workercareclinic.com/> |
| **Pasco** | **Lourdes Occupational Health Center- Clinic**9915 Sandifur Parkway, Pasco, WA 99301(509) 546-2222<https://www.yourlourdes.com/occupational-health/>  |
| **Seattle** | **Arch Consultants- Clinic**2214 N 54th Street, Seattle, Washington 98103(206) 301-8989<http://www.archconsultants.com/>  |
| **Federal Way** | **Concentra - Federal Way- Clinic**1300 S 320th St Ste B, Federal Way, WA 98003(253) 839-2727<https://www.concentra.com> |
| **Bellingham** | **Care Medical Group- Clinic**4043 Northwest Ave, Bellingham WA 98226(360) 734-4300<https://caremg.com/>  |
| **Olympia** | **Concentra- Clinic**3928 Pacific Ave SE, Lacey, WA 98503(360) 455-5354<https://www.concentra.com> |
| **Vancouver** | **Performance Occupational Health Service**11109 NE 14th Street, Suite A, Vancouver, WA 98684(360) 334-7001<https://www.occupationalhealthvancouver.com/> |

PLEASE NOTE: ALTSA does not recommend any particular provider. Options are provided for illustrative purposes only.