What is a ventilator?
A ventilator is a medical device used in intensive care to assist patients who have difficulty breathing or can’t breathe on their own. In severe cases of a patient with the coronavirus, physicians must put a patient onto a ventilator because their lungs become inflamed and filled with fluid.

What is a respirator?
An N95 device is a respirator protective device that filters out at least 95 percent of very small particles if properly fitted. Another 10-15 percent of particles CAN STILL get around the outside edges of the filter where it does not perfectly fit the face. If a person has not been trained in how to properly wear the N95 mask, they may only be about 30 to 40 percent effective in keeping particles out. It is designed to have a very close facial fit and remove dangerous airborne particles so medical professional in close proximity to a patient avoid catching their infections.

It’s important to note that as large particles containing the virus or pathogens rapidly evaporate and become much smaller (sub-micron) the virus contained within the particle will readily penetrate at the lowest efficiency or N95 filters and will also enter the facepiece of any respirator.

Additionally, it is as important to know how to properly remove the respirator. If you remove it wrong, you are at increased risk of cross-contamination.

Who should wear an N95 Respirator?
Healthcare workers and first responders. Respirators are imperative to prevent the spread of COVID-19 for healthcare workers and first responders. They wear an N95 respirator when caring for patients with COVID-19 and performing procedures that put them at risk of virus exposure. Ideally they are discarded after each patient encounter because if a healthcare workers wears an N95 respirator in the presence of an infected person it could be assumed that a large concentration of the virus would be collected on the external surface of the respirator. The virus could then be spread from the external surface by a healthcare worker’s hands or another surface and eventually infect someone else.

Who should wear a surgical mask?
Surgical masks are not approved respirators for healthcare workers. They do little to protect the person from being directly exposed to the virus. The virus takes the path of least resistance and can enter in the loose-fitting edges of the mask.

People infected by the virus can wear a surgical mask to stop a significant amount of the virus from exhaling into the air around them. Although there are loose edges, the major amount of droplets would fly straight into the surface of the mask. Once they hit the surface almost all of them stick and cannot be shaken loose.

Infected people should not re-use masks.
COVID-19 can survive many hours on surfaces. It can enter the body through the eyes, nose or even broken skin. An infected person wearing a surgical mask has potentially deposited thousands of viral particles onto the inner surface of the mask. The mask should be disposed of properly.

Who should wear homemade cloth or paper masks?
General public. A person who cannot perform social distancing should wear a homemade mask, scarf or bandana. Cloth masks should be washed after each use and not worn when dam or wet from spit or mucus.

Is it important to protect your eyes?
Face shields and goggles to prevent mucocutaneous exposure to splash and splatter and other PPE are critical to keeping healthcare workers safe, but are also on short supply. It is very important to address eye protection because eye exposures are the most frequent type of mucocutaneous exposures. Facilities using multiple use (reusable) eye protection must have safe decontamination practices in place and those with disposable eye protection in place must have safe disposal practices in place. If respirators are being reused, use of a face shield may be a viable physical barrier to better protect the integrity of that respirator. They are also essential to protect workers from body fluids and large particles.