Emergency measure will get more respirators to U.S. health care workers

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(HealthDay)—An emergency authorization will make more respirators

available for U.S. health care workers during the coronavirus outbreak, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Currently, most respirators are approved for use only in industrial settings, but the emergency authorization means that certain National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health-approved respirators, including N95s, not approved by the FDA can be used by health care workers during the coronavirus outbreak. The FDA decided that the respirators may be effective in protecting against airborne exposure to the coronavirus and approved the CDC's request for an emergency use of such respirators.

The measure does not apply to the public, who should not wear these respirators to protect against COVID-19, according to the agencies. They said respirators provide no added health benefit to the general public because the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low. The FDA and CDC said they are not aware of specific widespread shortages of personal protective equipment at the moment but said there are reports of increased ordering of these products and shortages have occurred in some U.S. health care institutions.

"The FDA, alongside the CDC and other federal, state, and local partners, have been aggressively addressing the COVID-19 outbreak. At the FDA, we have been working diligently to mitigate any potential shortages in the supply chain, including addressing increased demand and supply challenges associated with personal protective equipment," FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn, M.D., said in an agency news release. "Actions like today's emergency use authorization are one of many tools the FDA can utilize during a public health emergency to respond to critical public health needs."

More information: More Information