

## What is a HEPA purifier?

HEPA (*high efficiency particulate air*) purifiers contain filters that are made of a dense net of fibres. These purifiers force air through the mesh-like filters which then capture particles including pollen, smoke, dust, moisture, bacteria and viruses. This is **different** to a water-based purifier that uses a water reservoir as its filter.

## Utility for COVID-19 and bushfires?

Most people catch COVID-19 by inhaling it from shared air, and virus particles can linger in the air in indoor spaces. HEPA purifiers can clear these potentially infectious aerosols. They have also been used in bushfire settings when windows are encouraged to remain closed. In these enclosed room settings, HEPA purifiers can work to capture the particulate matter released during bush fires and will also capture virus particles.

### *Shared spaces*

HEPA purifiers are therefore being implemented in shared spaces including schools. This is seen as an additional measure in reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission until effective vaccine rates in the community are achieved.

### *At home*

Some families have enquired about purchasing HEPA purifiers to use at home. As a HEPA purifier is only effective in the room it is placed, there are limitations to how effective it is at home in mediating viral transmission. We also understand that mask wearing and social distancing is not practical at home. Instead, we encourage limiting spread within the home by getting tested if displaying symptoms and following Department of Health advice. When visitors to the home are again permitted, we recommend not allowing visitors with new or recent-onset respiratory symptoms to enter your home until they are well.

## Is it safe?

When used correctly, HEPA filters are safe. As long as the filters are changed according to standard, **there is minimal concern of HEPA filters recirculating caught particles or becoming a source for infections such as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa***. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been reports of users making homemade masks using HEPA filters intended for air purifiers. This is not recommended and can be unsafe.