

Facial Coverings for School

Wearing a mask or cloth face covering is an important way we can prevent the spread of Coronavirus when out in public. This includes the school environment, where children, adolescents, teachers, and staff are in close proximity to each other, and physical distancing is more difficult. Getting kids to wear a mask for any amount of time can be challenging. It will take practice and positive reinforcement to help them be successful. Below are some tips and tricks to introduce mask wearing to your child and help make mask wearing more comfortable and tolerable.

Introduce wearing a mask to your child gradually:

- *Model Mask wearing:* Wear your mask around your child. Show them others wearing masks and talk about why you are wearing them. For children 5 and up, talk about how the body works and how masks keep us safe from germs. Talk to your child about being a helper and when they wear a mask they are being a great helper to others.
- *Customize your child's mask:* Try different styles and materials and allow your child to choose what feels best to them. For younger children make it fun and playful. Let them decorate a mask or choose a mask with a favorite character or theme. Make a mask for their stuffed animals or dolls, too.
- *Practice, practice, practice!* Start small and build up gradually. It's important to not move onto the next step until your child has mastered the first one...
- Have your child hold their mask up to their face. Then have them practice wearing it with one loop over the ear, then over both ears.
- Have your child wear the mask covering their chin, then their mouth, then just below their nose. Finally, in the proper position covering both their mouth and nose. Make sure they know that over the nose is the right way to wear it.
- Have your child wear their mask for a few seconds, then build up in increments until they can wear it for a minute or two. Once they can wear a mask for five minutes, try jumping up in five-minute increments.

- Have a clear signal for your time goal: Count down or use a timer to signal when your child can take a break from wearing their mask. Use lots of positive reinforcement throughout, like verbal praise and high fives.
- If your child takes their mask off before the goal time, pause and restart. Praise what went well. End each practice session on a positive note, for example: If your goal was a minute but your child didn't quite get there, make the last practice a 30-second session, so they can end with success.

Build in rewards and reinforcements:

- Count down using a time to signal when a reward is earned. (i.e. first, we will practice wearing our mask for 5 minutes, then we will play trucks)
- Offer a favorite activity while practicing wearing their mask. (i.e. board game, reading/looking at a book)
- When they are ready, plan a rewarding activity that requires wearing a mask.

For older children/adolescents:

- Validate feelings of frustration with wearing a mask. Let them know they are being heard and you understand why they are annoyed. Once your adolescent feels heard you will have better luck at reminding them that we all have a responsibility to wear masks for their own protection and the protection of others.
- Talk with your child and clarify misconceptions they may have heard such as “masks don't really help” or “it doesn't matter if it's covering my nose as long as it's covering my mouth”.

Tips for children and adolescents with sensory or developmental needs:

- For children who are sensitive to touch and sound, a soft fabric mask may be more comfortable than a paper mask that rubs and rustles.
- If your child doesn't like any pressure on their ears, find a mask that ties behind the head, or use clips or buttons to fasten ear loops to a headband, hat or extender band.

- If your child is sensitive to their breath in the mask, offer them the choice of a scented lip balm for inside the mask and on their upper lip. For older kids, offer a hard candy or mint.
- If your child's skin is sensitive or irritated by extended mask wear, talk to your doctor. Trouble spots often include the bridge of the nose and on the cheekbones. Your child's doctor may be able to recommend skin protectant or another way to resolve the issue.

Tips for children or adolescents who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Ear loop masks can cause extra noise as it rubs against the ears that may be annoying to those who use hearing aids or cochlear implants. You may want to consider choosing a mask with straps in the back rather than an ear loop.
- If your child relies on lip reading consider choosing a mask for you and others around your child that has a clear window across the mouth.

Tips for wearing a mask with eye glasses:

- Make sure the mask is shaped around the bridge of the nose.
- Wear your mask higher on your nose and set glasses on top of the mask
- Use an anti-fogging solution on eye glasses or wash them with soapy water, shake off excess and allow them to dry.

Tips for individuals with asthma:

- Make sure your child's asthma is well controlled and they are in the green zone—be consistent with their controller medication and keep track of peak flows as recommended by your physician.
- Choose a face covering that covers well and comfortably but it should not be too thick or obstruct air flow—only 3 layers of fabric. Moisture wicking fabric may help.
- If you have questions or concerns about wearing a mask and asthma talk with your Primary Care Provider

Tips for Combating Mask Breath:

- Brush teeth regularly and rinse with mouthwash
- Use scented lip balm
- For older children: Eat a mint or hard candy prior to putting on the mask

Remember to Take a Break: There may be times when anxiety becomes too much or your child just needs a breath of fresh air. If this happens it's best to take a mask break.

When taking a break:

- If possible, go outside and get some fresh air.
- If you need to be inside for the break, choose an area with minimal traffic.
- Be sure to wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after removing and replacing your mask. Always avoid touching your face!

Mask Purchase Suggestions: Two layers of cloth - preferably cotton - internal filter is not required but OK to use:

Nano Air Mask

Busy Bee Cotton Masks

Crayola Kids School Mask Pack

Old Navy

Gap

SchoolMaskPack.com

Allet Masks (older children)

Weddingstar Kids

Ahleta Girl Everyday Masks (for boys as well)

Not Permitted for School Use:

Neck Gaiters or Bandannas

Masks with Ventilation Valves or Vents