

Tips for Wearing a Face Mask or Covering

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) recommends that adults and **kids age 2 years and older** wear cloth face coverings (or a face mask) when out to help slow the spread of COVID-19. However, some toddlers and young children may feel uneasy about masks. They may need extra support and comfort. Additionally, children with special needs or sensory concerns may have difficulty wearing a mask.

Here are some tips to help you teach your child how to wear a mask and how to make it more acceptable and fun!

**Before getting started, be aware of choking hazards, age guidelines, and any other medical complications.*

Give the mask a purpose

- **Look in the mirror with face masks on** and discuss them with your child
 - **For children younger than age 3:** Answer their questions in simple language. Explain that sometimes people wear face masks when they are sick and to help others stay healthy.
 - **For children older than age 3:** Focus on germs. Explain that face masks help make sure you keep germs away.
 - **For older children:** Refer to trusted resources, such as the CDC, for illustrations that show how face masks can help prevent the virus from spreading
- [Watch a video](#) with your child to help them understand

Make it fun

- **Decorate your face masks** so they are personalized and fun
- **Draw a face mask** on their favorite book character
- **Get fun prints to wear**
- **With younger children,** introduce a sense of play. Children can pretend to be a doctor or nurse while wearing their masks
- **Turn the mask into a costume**
- **For older children,** make it into a game (e.g., when you are out, if someone touches their mask, they must do a silly dance)

Practice

- **Practice through role play** (e.g., using a stuffed animal or real-life)
- **Show your child pictures** of other children wearing them
- **Practice wearing the face mask at home**
- **Start small** (e.g., 1 to 3 seconds, if needed)
- **Practice wearing a mask** during rewarding activities (e.g., screen time or video games)
- **Systematically increase face mask wearing time**
- **Consider using video** modeling to support [wearing face masks](#)

Reward the effort

- **Use praise or positive reinforcement** when your child/teen wears or tolerates wearing a face mask (e.g., earning marbles, or cotton balls for every time they put it on or wear it for 1 minute)
- **Each outing your child can keep the mask on** he/she earns a sticker. A predetermined number of stickers equals a prize

Wearing a mask can be an adjustment for anyone. Many children can wear a mask, it may just take a little preparation and creativity. For some children, a mask alternative may be necessary. Some alternatives are face shields with various designs, hats with a shield attached, and turtlenecks that pull up over your nose and mouth. With practice, patience and fun, you can get your child to wear a mask when you go out. If you need extra help, we are here for you.

Helpful Resources:

www.healthychildren.org

www.hopkinsmedicine.org

www.kidshealth.org

www.cdc.gov

Need more ideas or help?

Schedule a teleconsultation with Rethink's behavior experts today!