

Family Education Sheet

Helping Your Child to Wear a Mask



Boston Children's Hospital

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Wearing a face mask or face covering in public is a big change. It can be hard for your child to get used to it. Our Child Life Services team offers these tips for how to help your child get used to wearing a mask in public.

Key points

- Take it slowly. Start by having your child wear a mask for a short time and add more day by day.
- Your child is more likely to feel comfortable with the mask if they feel like it's "theirs."

Have your child explore and play with the mask.

Children learn best through play! Show the mask to your child at home or in another comfortable place. Let them explore and play with it. Let go of expectations and try not to pressure your child to put it on.

Help your child feel like their mask is their own special thing.

Make the mask special. Help your child decorate their mask using stickers, give the mask a name, or make a mask with fabric using a favorite character. Building a feeling of pride and ownership of the mask will help them feel more comfortable and happier about wearing it.



Make wearing a mask feel normal.

Use masks with dolls and stuffed animals. Bring the mask into your child's favorite games and activities. Get creative!

- Play peek-a-boo with the mask (use different funny faces each time).
- Use art supplies to make butterflies or other animals out of the mask.
- Play catch with cotton balls using the mask as a basket.
- Paint a mask using watercolors.



Keep practicing.

Set aside time for your child to practice wearing the mask on their face. Tell them that it's just practice, and they can take the mask off at any time. Take turns and let your child put the mask on your face first. Have them hold the mask up to their face and add the ear loops when they're ready.



Here are some other tips:

- Praise your child often with each try.
- Choose a fun activity that they enjoy and start to do it only while your child is wearing the mask.
- Use a timer to help them keep the mask on for longer. Slowly add more time. If they are OK with the mask on their face for 30 seconds on one day, go up to 1 minute the next day. Make it fun and encourage your child to add more time to each session.
- Think about short activities around the house that your child does every day. This could be checking the mail, bringing out the trash or taking the dog outside. These kinds of activities can be a great way to practice wearing a mask outside.
- Take a break from playing or practicing with the mask if your child gets frustrated.

Be realistic.

It's OK to let your child take breaks from wearing their mask while out in public. This can be done safely by finding a private space or distancing yourself safely from others.

It may help to plan public outings for shorter lengths of time than you would have in the past. This can help break up the total amount of time your child is wearing a mask into more comfortable blocks of time.