

# Tips to Help Children Become More Comfortable with Masks

In response to COVID-19, adults and children over the age of 10 need to wear masks or cloth facial coverings. Masks/cloth coverings can be disconcerting/scary/unfamiliar for children. The following information may guide family and caregiver conversations to help children feel more comfortable with wearing masks/cloth coverings and seeing them on others.

## **Understand why masks/cloth coverings can be scary.**

Children under 6 identify people by individual facial features. Wearing a mask/cloth covering can make it hard or impossible for a child to identify people they know because their identifying facial features may be hidden. Children become better at identifying full faces between the ages of 6 to 14.

## **Explanations about why we are wearing masks/cloth coverings.**

The younger children are, the simpler the explanation should be.

- 2-3 years old: Masks/cloth coverings help us stay healthy.
- 4-6 year olds: Everyone has their own germs and sometimes those germs can make someone else sick. Masks/cloth coverings help us keep our coughs and sneezes from spraying onto other people. Masks/cloth coverings help us be health heroes just like washing our hands and staying 6 feet away from other people. These things help us and others stay safe. [You can link the hero idea to superheroes your child/ren admire(s).]

## **Making masks/cloth coverings more comfortable for children.**

- Practice putting masks/cloth coverings on and off.
- Play peekaboo with a mask and let the child pull the mask/cloth covering on and off the adults or her/himself.
- Make and play with mask/cloth coverings for a doll or stuffed animal.
- Role play thanking the doll or stuffed animal for helping us stay safe.
- Encourage children to decorate their mask/cloth coverings.

## **What if children won't wear masks/cloth coverings?**

The younger children are, the more challenging this may be. If children are too frightened of seeing others in masks/cloth coverings or cannot wear them themselves, children should not be in groups in close contact.

## **Things to remember when wearing masks/cloth coverings.**

To be effective, masks/cloth coverings must cover noses and mouths. Hands need to be washed if touching the mask/cloth coverings. The less the mask/cloth covering is touched, the better. Below you can find some resources about children and masks.



**Additional Helpful Resources:**



**Should Young Children Wear Masks?**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/09/parenting/coronavirus-kids-masks.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>

**Children May Be Afraid of Masks. Here's How to Help.**

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/13/well/family/coronavirus-children-masks-fear.html>



**Masks Are Scary to Children-Good Parenting**

<https://www.chesapeakefamily.com/family/blogs/good-parenting/9977-masks-are-scary-to-children-good-parenting>

**Masks and Children During COVID-19**

<https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/masks-and-children-during-covid-19/>

