

5 Tips for Helping Kids Wear Masks During COVID-19

Remember: Masks are only recommended for children over 2 years of age.

It can be scary and tough for anyone to start wearing masks, especially kids. Here are some tips and tricks to make it a little easier.

1 Explain why it is important to wear masks AND validate frustrations with mask wearing

- Use language children can understand to explain the concept of germ such as: “Germs are special to our body...some are good and some are bad. The bad ones can make us sick. Since we do not always know which germs are good or bad, wearing a mask can help make sure we keep any bad germs away from our body.” “Wearing masks will help keeps others and us safe. “ “We wear masks to protect other people from our germs and to protect us from other people’s germs.”
- Discuss how mask wearing is a current rule (similar to other rules – e.g., wearing shoes when we go outside, stopping at a red traffic light)
- Remind your child that even with their mouth covered, others can still recognize them/read their emotions (e.g., “people can look at your eyes to know your feelings”). You could look in the mirror while wearing masks to talk about it.
- Show your child pictures of other children wearing masks.
- It’s okay to say things like, “I’m sad that we need to wear a mask” or “It’s frustrating we need to wear a mask.”

2 Be a mask role model

- Show your child how to put a mask on
- Tell your child prior to putting on your mask
- Wear your mask properly
 - A. Teach your child to wash hands before touching mask (for 20 seconds)
 - B. Then put the loop around ears
 - C. Ensure the mask covers the nose, chin, and mouth
 - D. Wash cloth masks after ever use



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3 Decorate the mask or let your child pick out his/her mask

- Engage your child with the mask design (let them pick out colour, fabric, and design)
- Decorating masks is fine if it does not affect mask integrity (it is not recommended to draw on paper or surgical masks)

4 Practice wearing the mask at home

- Consistency helps form good habits!
- Start with short periods of time to help your child get used to it. Gradually increase the length of time as your child gets better and better at wearing masks.
- Wear the masks while doing some fun activities at home
- You could even make play masks for stuffed animals or dolls

5 Reward efforts

- Build in small rewards for your child's efforts at following a mask wearing plan
- Best rewards are low cost or no cost rewards. We recommend you brainstorm rewards with your child. Here are some examples of rewards
 - *Special activities such as letting your child choose the family dinner
 - *Tangible rewards such as letting your child choose an item from the dollar store or consider loaning something to your child - such as letting him borrow your hat if he enjoys wearing it.
 - *Consider creating a token or sticker chart where your child can earn chips or tokens on a daily basis for wearing masks that can be later exchanged for rewards using a rewards menu.

