

RSAC Tips: Face Masks

Wearing a mask is something many of us are still getting used to doing every time we leave the home. The tips below may help as you teach your child to adjust to this new aspect of our daily lives.

Choose your mask thoughtfully.

Masks come in all different patterns, shapes, and string attachments. Choosing the mask options that best fit your child may set you up for a higher chance of success. It is also important to include your child in the process. Mask pattern choices can be a favorite character, color, or animal.

Use playtime!

Once you have a few mask options to try out, touching and manipulating (e.g., turning it around, squishing it into a ball, etc.) a clean mask will provide the sensory feeling of the mask and familiarize your child with this new item. Provide lots of praise and commentary on what they are doing, like, “Cool! You squished it up into a tiny ball!”

Slow and steady wins the race.

Follow a slow, step-wise process to help your child acclimate to the mask, such as those listed in the box to the right. For each of the steps, practice many times in your home or another safe and comfortable environment, with plenty of break time and praise, before introducing a new step. If at any point your child begins to look uncomfortable, it's a great idea to stop and go back to a previous step. It is important that your child has a positive experience with the mask desensitization process so that masks are not associated with discomfort or anxiety.

Steps to Acclimating to the Mask:

1. Teach your child to put the mask fabric up to their mouth but not connect the ear straps.
2. Place ear straps over one ear and allow the mask to hang.
3. Place ear straps over ears and mask over mouth for 5 sec, then remove.
4. Place ear straps over ears, mask over mouth, and mask touching nose for 5 sec, then remove.
5. Place mask completely on (with material covering nose and mouth) for 5 sec, then remove.
6. Begin to slowly increase the time requirement for wearing.
7. Practice in your backyard, on walks, in the car, etc.

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