

FACE COVERINGS AND OUR YOUNGEST LEARNERS

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Children will begin to see adults in their lives wearing face coverings. This may add to the confusion that young children may feel during this time with the changes they are seeing in routines and family activities. Many of the adults that children see with face coverings will be familiar but some may not be.

HELPING CHILDREN ADJUST TO FACE COVERINGS



IN THE COMMUNITY

If adults have to bring children with them, they should explain that some people will be wearing coverings over their noses and mouths. They are helpful so people won't get sick. They will stop wearing face coverings when they no longer need them.



IN CHILDCARE FACILITIES

Depending on the locality of School, compliance varies hugely. If the School is supporting the childcare needs of essential workers, they may need to have the faculty wear face coverings. Schools should determine if grown-ups need coverings. If so, introduce face coverings with photos of familiar faculty members wearing them and then ask the preschoolers and older what they think. After listening, you'll get a sense of their level of interest, concern, knowledge or entertainment. Next, announce they will see their teachers wearing face coverings. Children three years old and older can make their own if they choose to but should not be forced to wear them at the facility.



ANSWERING CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

Children may want to know more about face coverings. Let the children know they do not have to wear a face coverings unless they want to. Dramatic play, such as creating or wearing a face covering, may help some children adjust to this concept. Explain that people can still breathe, talk and even sing, although it might sound funny while wearing a face covering.



What makes face coverings scary for preschoolers and some pre-k children is that face coverings make it harder to recognize their people (family, friends, neighbors), an essential process in feeling safe and secure. Remember, Halloween for this age group can make children anxious.



CHILDREN WEARING FACE COVERINGS

The Centers for Disease Control did not specially address children and face coverings and the American Pediatric Association has not opined on this. Children under two years old should not wear any face covering due to concerns of suffocation. Toddlers over two years of age may end up playing with a face covering by taking it on and off again thus touching the face too often, so it is not recommended.

For three- to-six-year-old children, wearing face coverings may very much be culturally and socially appropriate. Given where the child lives, people may get upset if all people are not wearing face coverings in public places. There is also a suggestion that face coverings might mitigate somewhat messy sneezes and coughs for children and may offer a modicum of protection against contagion. It might be helpful to tell children in northern climates, anyway, that it is a lot like wearing a tiny part of a scarf or ski face covering, which children might appreciate they can breathe through, lest that make them anxious. It is also best if the children can make their individual face coverings.

Try not to bring children to stores at all if it can be avoided. If you go outside, keep all children at least six feet away from others. Remember, wearing face coverings pales in comparison to the significance of social distancing and hand washing.

SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES

- Nationwide - <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/700childrens/2020/04/mask-safety-101>;
- Zero to Three - [Why are people wearing masks? Why are people covering their faces?](#)
- New York Times - [Should Young Children Wear Masks?](#)

