



## Face Masks for Children During COVID-19

Masks remain a simple but powerful tool to protect against COVID-19, especially for children too young to get the vaccine yet ([/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Does-my-unvaccinated-child-still-have-to-wear-a-mask.aspx](#)).

Read on for answers to some frequently asked questions about masks and children during the COVID-19 pandemic.



### Why do we still need to wear face masks?

It is possible to have COVID-19 but not have any symptoms. That's why wearing face masks is still so important, especially for unvaccinated children. Masks reduce the chance of spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

A child or adult is considered fully vaccinated ([/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/hug-their-grandparents-once-they-get-the-vaccine.aspx](#)) two weeks after getting the final dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

### Should children wear masks?

Until a child is fully vaccinated against COVID-19, they should continue to wear a face mask and keep a safe physical distance indoors around people they don't live with or who may have the virus. Anyone unvaccinated should also wear face masks outdoors in large group settings or when physical distancing isn't possible.

Face masks can be safely worn by all children 2 years of age and older, including most children with special health conditions, with rare exception.

Children should **not** wear a mask if they are under 2 years old, however, because of suffocation risk. Also, anyone unconscious or unable to remove a face covering on their own should not wear one.

### When do children need to wear masks?

Children age 2 and older who are not yet fully vaccinated, with rare exception, should wear masks when they are at school ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx](#)), child care ([/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Is-it-safe-to-send-my-child-to-child-care-during-COVID-19.aspx](#)) or camp ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/What-to-Look-for-In-a-Summer-Camp-COVID-19.aspx](#)), and while participating in group activities such as most indoor sports ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Why-Cloth-Face-Coverings-are-Needed-in-Youth-Sports-During-COVID-19.aspx](#)) and outdoors sports that have close contact. They should also wear masks any time they are unable to stay a safe distance ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Social-Distancing-Why-Keeping-Your-Distance-Helps-Keep-Others-Safe.aspx](#)) from others, such as the grocery store.

Everyone should also continue to wear them when traveling ([/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Will-it-be-safe-for-our-family-to-travel-over-spring-break.aspx](#)) on a plane, bus, train, or other form of public transportation, and at the airport or station.

If you have a medically fragile child or an at-risk adult in your household, you may want to consider having anyone at home who is not fully vaccinated wear masks at home to help protect them.

## How to Properly Wear a Mask

[Back to Top](#)

## How do I help my child get used to wearing a mask?

It is understandable if your child seems afraid of wearing a mask at first. Here are a few ideas that might help make them more comfortable:

- Look in the mirror with the face mask on and talk about it.
- Put a mask on a favorite stuffed animal.
- Decorate them so they're more personalized and fun.
- Show your child pictures of other children wearing them.
- Draw one on their favorite book character.
- Practice wearing the face mask at home to help your child get used to it.

**For children under 3**, it's best to answer their questions simply in language they understand. If they ask about why people are wearing face masks, explain that sometimes people need to wear them to stay healthy.

**For children over 3**, try focusing on germs. Explain that germs are special to your own body. Some germs are good and some are bad. The bad ones can make you sick. Since we can't always tell which are good or bad, the face masks help make sure you keep those germs away from your own body.

The good news is, children have gotten used to masks and are less likely to feel singled out or strange about wearing them. It has quickly become the "new normal" for all of us.

## What about children with special health care needs (/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-19-Youth-with-Special-Health-Care-Needs.aspx)?

- Children with weakened immune systems or who have health conditions that put them at high risk for infections are encouraged to wear an N95 mask for protection.
- Children with medical conditions that interfere with cognitive or lung function may have a hard time tolerating a face mask. For these children, special precautions may be needed.

## Is there a "right way" to wear a mask?

Yes. Place the mask securely over the mouth **and** nose and stretch it from ear to ear. It should fit snugly along the sides of the face without any gaps. It can be held on with ear loops or ties. Remember to wash hands before and after wearing it and avoid touching it once it's on. When back home, avoid touching the front of the face mask by taking it off from behind.

Wash and completely dry cloth face masks after each wearing.

**Note:** Face masks should not be worn when eating or drinking. Also, make sure the mask has no choking or strangulation hazards for young children.

## What kind of face mask is best?

[Back to Top](#)

Face masks with multiple layers of fabric are fine for most people to wear. Try to find the right size for your child's face. Adult masks are usually 6x12 inches, and even a child-sized 5x10 inch covering may be too large for small children.

## How do I keep my child from touching their face mask?

It may be challenging for very young children not to fidget with their face mask, so expect to give your child plenty of gentle reminders. When mask-wearing is reinforced by adults and peers, they will learn to follow directions. Just like children understand that they must wear bicycle helmets and buckle into their car seats, they will learn to wear masks correctly and routinely when needed.

## How do I protect my baby who is too young for a mask?

The best way to protect your baby is to practice physical distancing, and encourage people who are around your baby to wear face masks and take other measures to reduce COVID-19 risk.

## Remember

Along with physical distancing (</English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/Social-Distancing-Why-Keeping-Your-Distance-Helps-Keep-Others-Safe.aspx>), hand washing (</English/health-issues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Hand-Washing-A-Powerful-Antidote-to-Illness.aspx>) and vaccination (</English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/when-can-children-get-the-COVID-19-vaccine.aspx>) as soon as everyone in your family is eligible, mask wearing is key to reducing SARS-CoV-2 infection and spread. If you have any concerns about your child's health, talk with your pediatrician.

## More Information

- [Ask the Pediatrician: Does my unvaccinated child still have to wear a mask when the rest of the family doesn't? \(/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Does-my-unvaccinated-child-still-have-to-wear-a-mask.aspx\)](/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/Does-my-unvaccinated-child-still-have-to-wear-a-mask.aspx)
- [Ask the Pediatrician: How can I help my child, who has a developmental disability, cope during COVID-19? \(/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/How-can-I-help-child-developmental-disability,-cope-COVID-19.aspx\)](/English/tips-tools/ask-the-pediatrician/Pages/How-can-I-help-child-developmental-disability,-cope-COVID-19.aspx)
- [Mask Mythbusters: 5 Common Misconceptions about Kids & Face Masks \(/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Mask-Mythbusters.aspx\)](/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Mask-Mythbusters.aspx)
- [Safe Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic \(/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx\)](/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Return-to-School-During-COVID-19.aspx)
- [AAP COVID-19 Interim Guidance: Face Masks \(https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/cloth-face-coverings/\) \(AAP.org\)](https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/cloth-face-coverings/)

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