

Guide for Parents

Helping Children who are Struggling with Mask-Wearing

Step 1



Talk to your child about the importance of masks

- Let your child share how he/she feels about COVID-19 and having to wear masks, and acknowledge his/her concerns. Use pictures of different emotions as prompts, if it is difficult for your child to express feelings with words.
- Explain the importance of mask-wearing. [Click here](#) to watch how masks can protect us from getting sick. You can also show your child pictures of different professionals (such as healthcare workers) wearing masks and explain why they are doing so.
- Introduce and model helpful thoughts to rationalise and normalise the wearing of masks.

Masks and face shields serve as protection against droplets and particles in the air.

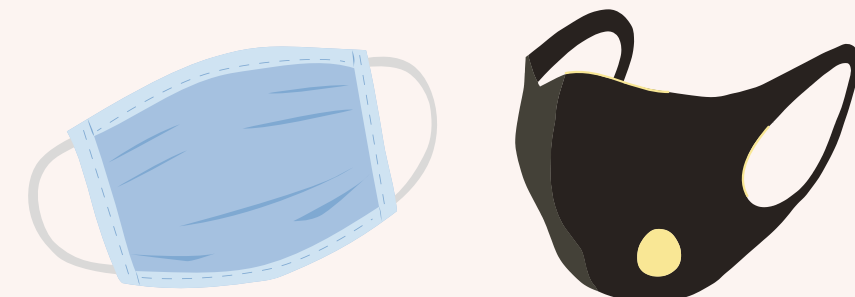
It feels uncomfortable but it's only temporary.

Everyone is wearing masks, and I can too!

Plastic face shields prevent any droplets from entering our eyes, and other parts of our face not covered by a mask.

Step 2

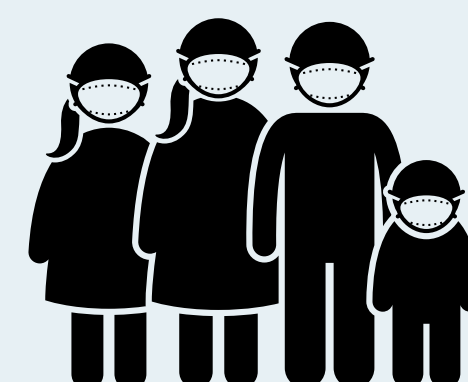
Involve your child in selecting the right mask



- Let your child select a mask he/she prefers and is most comfortable with. Options can include masks made with different types of material, colours, or types of fastening (elastic around the ears, or tied behind the head), or plastic face shields (attached to a band or a cap).
- Get creative! [Click here](#) to learn how you can make your own masks with simple materials. Make it a family activity where everyone can be involved!

Step 3

Let your child practise wearing the mask



- Start slow by letting your child put on the mask or plastic face shield for a family member or on a soft toy, before putting it on himself/herself.
- Start small by letting him/her wear it for 1 minute, then gradually increase the duration.
- Provide rewards that have worked before (verbal praises, a pat on the back, or a favourite activity) to motivate and acknowledge his/her effort to try!



Guide for Parents: What Should I Do If...

...MY CHILD SAYS THAT HE/SHE CANNOT BREATHE WITH THE MASK ON?

Acknowledge that breathing does not feel the same with a mask, and assure your child with facts.

We are still able to get enough air with the mask on! The layers of the mask make breathing feel a little uncomfortable, but they are important for protection.

Help your child gradually get used to wearing a mask for longer periods of time.

... MY CHILD STARTS TO PANIC?

Remain calm and stay in control.

Use a firm, gentle tone of voice to communicate that they are safe, and that you are there for them.

Guide them to take deep breaths to relax their bodies.

Give them time to calm down.

While caring for your child, help him/her to relax and work through strong emotions throughout the day which may include listening to music, exercising, drawing, or watching a favourite movie.

I know you don't feel okay now, but you will be okay. We are here to help you get through this. It will end soon. Let's take some slow, deep breaths.

...MY CHILD REFUSES TO GO OUT?

Going out for essential activities can be challenging if your child is afraid of putting on a mask or plastic face shield.

Acknowledge your child's feelings, but also remind your child of what might happen if he/she stayed home.

Staying at home prevents us from doing important things, like seeing the doctor, therapist, or attending lessons in school.