

The CDC now recommends people over age 2 wear cloth face masks when outside their homes.

The purpose of people wearing masks in public right now is to protect the community. Since so many people who have COVID-19 don't have symptoms, wearing masks can help reduce the possibility that someone with no symptoms could transmit the disease to others.



Should children wear masks?

- The CDC does not recommend masks for children under age two.
- If children are at home with just the usual residents, they do not need to wear a mask, assuming that they have not been exposed to anyone with COVID-19.
- If children can be kept at least 6 feet away from others, and not be in contact with surfaces that could harbor the virus, then they do not need a mask for the protection of themselves or others.
- For example, during a walk outdoors, as long as children can maintain social distancing of more than 6 feet and do not touch tables, water fountains, playground equipment or other things that infected people might have touched, then they will not acquire the infection and would not need masks.
- Places where a child would benefit from wearing a mask are places where they are likely to encounter other people at a closer than 6 foot range. For example, if you must take your child to the doctor, or the pharmacy or grocery store, and are unable to leave them at home, wearing masks in those settings could be beneficial.
- Children with fever or respiratory or GI symptoms like a cough, congestion, runny nose, diarrhea, or vomiting should not leave home.
- Children with severe cognitive or respiratory impairments may have a hard time tolerating a face mask, so special precautions may be needed with these children, such as monitoring with a pulse oximeter if available, and/or maintaining greater physical distance from others outside their home.

Situations in which children should not wear a mask include:

- Children under the age of 2 years, due to risks of suffocation.
- If the only face covering available is a possible choking or strangulation hazard.
- If the child has difficulty breathing with the face covering or is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without assistance.
- If wearing the face covering causes the child to increase risk of getting exposed to the virus because they are touching their face more frequently.

What about infants or children with special health care needs?

- If you must go outside or to a place where you are not able to practice social distancing with an infant, cover the infant carrier with a blanket, which helps protect the baby, but still gives them the ability to breathe comfortably. Do not leave the blanket on the carrier in the car or at any time when the baby and carrier are not in direct view.
- Children who are considered high-risk or severely immunocompromised are encouraged to wear an N95 mask to best protect themselves.
- Families of children at higher risk are encouraged to use a standard surgical mask if they are sick to prevent the spread of illness to others.

What if a child is scared of wearing a mask, or too young to understand not to tamper with it?

- If your child is scared of wearing a mask, parents should wear masks too so your child doesn't feel alone. Some other ideas to help make masks seem less scary are:
 - While wearing masks, look in the mirror and talk about it.
 - Put a mask on a favorite stuffed animal.
 - Decorate a mask so it's more personalized and fun.
 - Show your child pictures of other children wearing masks.
 - Draw a mask on their favorite book character.
- Have your child practice wearing a mask at home first.

What kind of material is best for a mask for the average person to wear?

- Pleated masks with elastic are likely to work best for children, but the right size is important. Adult masks are usually 6x12 inches, and even a child-sized 5x10 inch mask may be too large for young children. Try to find the right size for your child's face and be sure to adjust it for a secure fit.
- Due to very limited supply now, professional grade masks like N-95 masks should be reserved for medical professionals on the front lines who have increased risk of exposure to coronavirus in close proximity.