

A Parent's Guide

Helping your child wear a face mask

Your child may have challenges or discomfort when wearing a face mask. After talking about the importance of face masks, ask your child about what might be bothersome and any preferences in type, color, or style. Once you understand, you can help work with your child to help make the face mask more comfortable to wear.



ABOUT FACE MASKS

WHY

Coronavirus can be spread when we breathe, cough or sneeze. Wearing a mask reduces spread from person to person.

WHO

People who wear face masks help prevent the virus from spreading. Children under the age of two and those with breathing challenges should not wear face masks

HOW

When wearing a face mask, make sure it covers both the nose and mouth. After using the face mask, remove it and be sure to wash hands. Disposable masks should be thrown in the trash and fabric masks should be washed in the washing machine.

WHERE

Use face masks when in public settings, especially in places where you are in close contact with others such as a grocery store, laundromat, pharmacy, or bank.

TYPES OF MASKS

Depending on your child's comfort level and face shape



Face mask



Neck Gaiter

GETTING COMFORTABLE

Mask Anxiety

If your child expresses fear over the mask, address what is bothering them. This may be due to fear of the mask itself, itchiness, feeling hot or difficulty breathing.

- Include your child in making the mask or even **decorating** it with stickers or using fun fabrics
- Have a child feel more comfortable with face masks by seeing other family members wear them as well
- When creating or choosing a mask, experiment with **different fabric textures**

Ways to get used to a face mask

Use a "**visual timer**" technique. Put a timer on and wear a mask alongside your child at home. Incrementally increase the time to allow your child to get used to the feel.



Rewards. Give your child a reward for practicing wearing the mask at home. For example, allow your child screen time while wearing the mask.

How to make a mask:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf>

Be patient! It may take days or even weeks for a child to get used to a face mask. There are people around you who could help. Ask your health care provider to get the support you need.

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Help your Child Feel Good about Using and Seeing Others Wearing Face Masks



Explain the reasons for using a face mask as simply as possible. Frequent review of pictures, videos, and picture stories may help your child learn and become more familiar.



Your child may need to wear a face mask at times when leaving the house. Since it may take weeks or even months for a child to become comfortable with wearing it, start now and practice often to help make wearing face masks as positive as possible.



To help your child tolerate and become more comfortable with how the face mask feels on the skin, look for face mask fabrics, textures, and colors/patterns your child will tolerate and prefer.



Your child will be seeing other people wearing masks. It may be hard to recognize who the person is or determine facial expressions and feelings. Your child might associate face masks with something scary, such as a traumatic experience, a character in a movie, or a Halloween costume. When at home, have family members wear their face masks at various parts of the day so your child can see you in different situations.



Have your child see, hold, touch, and wear the face mask in stages. Provide praise, tickles, tokens, tapping elbows, cheering, or other rewards after each success. Each step may take a different length of time for your child to become comfortable. Examples of steps are:

1. See the face mask in different places in your house.
2. See family members wear their face masks at home. You can also put the mask on a favorite doll or stuffed animal.
3. Touch the face mask with hands.
4. Hold the face mask in hands.
5. Hold the face mask closer to the face, and even smell it.
6. Have the mask touch the face.
7. Let the mask cover the nose and mouth.
8. Stretch the face mask around the ears.
9. Wear the mask on the face.



At first, your child may be touching the face mask often, playing with it, or taking it on-and-off. It may be helpful to have your child wear the mask during favorite activities such as when watching a favorite video, playing a favorite game, or getting a piece of a favorite snack. This will show your child that the mask isn't only for situations that are unfamiliar or scary.

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YOUTUBE: We Wear Masks - A Social Story about the coronavirus

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-uMn6q_U

YOUTUBE: COVID-19: Supporting Individuals with Autism During Social Distancing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40ftQ9bla3g>

YOUTUBE: Caregiver tips to make mask-wearing easier for people with autism | Autism Speaks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1l4BcpTflk>

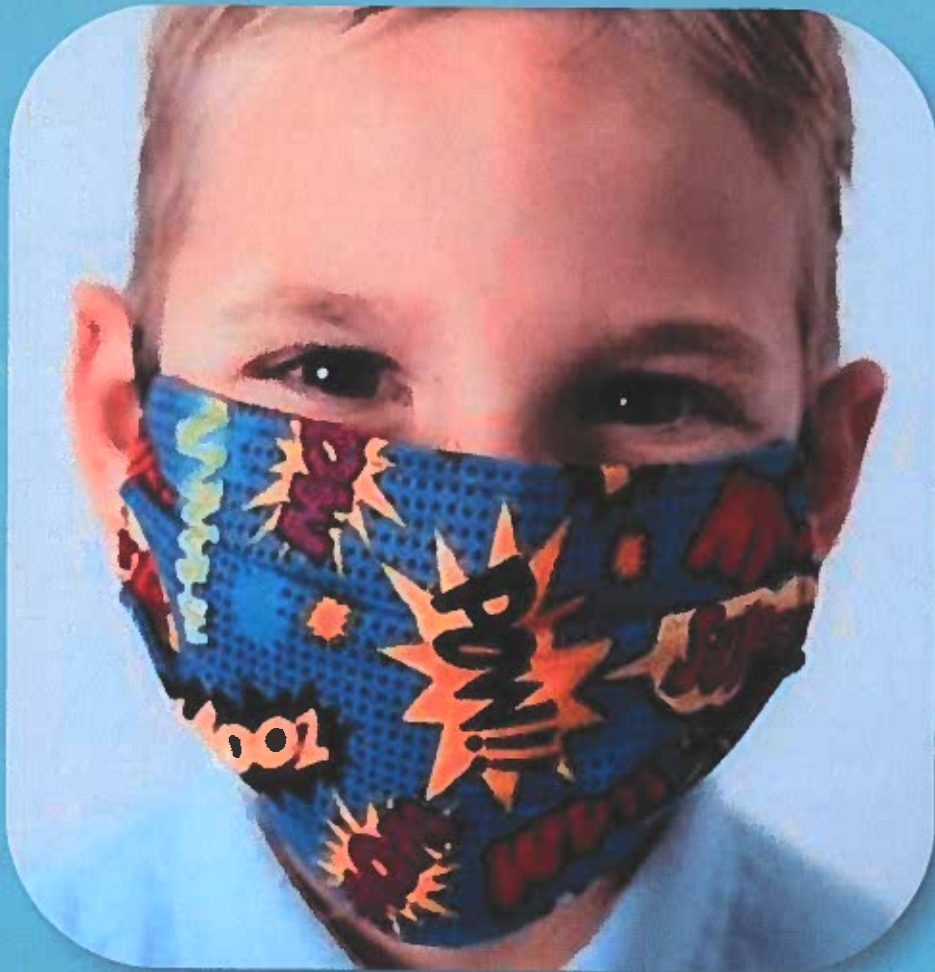
Autism & COVID-19 Webinar 4: Wearing Face Masks

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoYgythZB-I>

POST:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2020/05/11/some-autistic-people-cant-tolerate-face-masks-heres-how-were-managing-with-our-son/>

I Can Stay Healthy by
Wearing a Face Mask





I have been staying at home more because of the coronavirus. The coronavirus are germs that make people sick.

Coronavirus germs are so small that I can't see them.

Coronavirus can be passed from person to person and make me and other people sick.

That is why I can't go to the places I usually do.



The coronavirus can be spread through the air.

Some ways that it spreads are when people breathe, cough or sneeze.



Wearing a face mask is an important way I can prevent coronavirus from spreading.

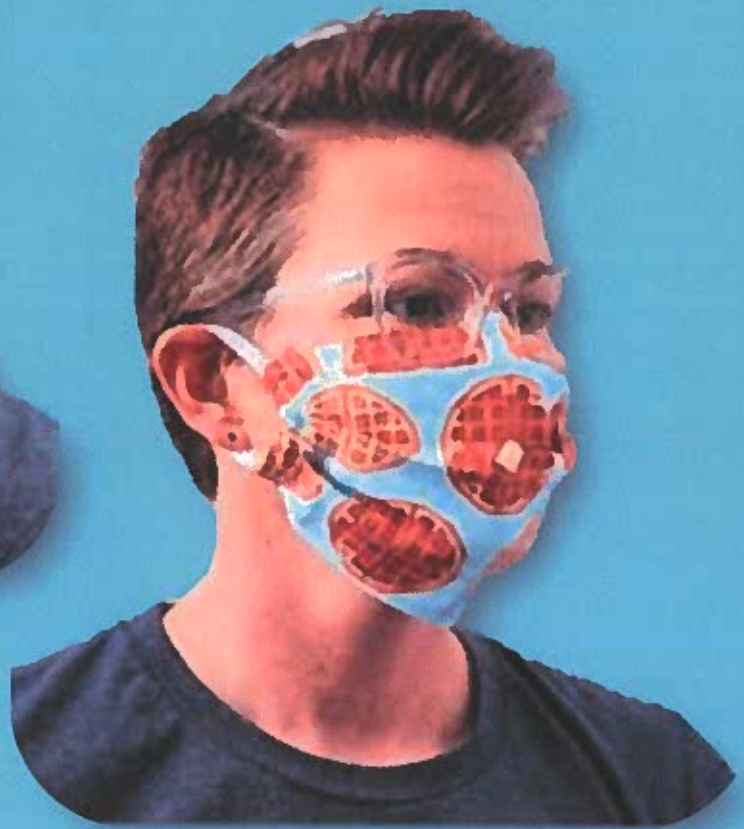
When I leave my house, there are many places I should wear a face mask.

Most of the time, these places will be where there are groups of people in one place.

There are different types of face masks.



Doctors, nurses, and others who work in health care wear certain types of face masks.



There are other types of face masks for people like me.

I can help make my own mask or even decorate it for fun!

The mask should cover my mouth and nose.



If the face mask feels uncomfortable to me,
I can let someone know.

Together, we can try different ways to make it
feel better for me when I wear it.

I can get used to the feeling by practicing
wearing it at home.



After coming inside, I wash my hands after I take off my face mask.



If my face mask is made of cloth, I need to wash it in the washing machine to keep it clean.

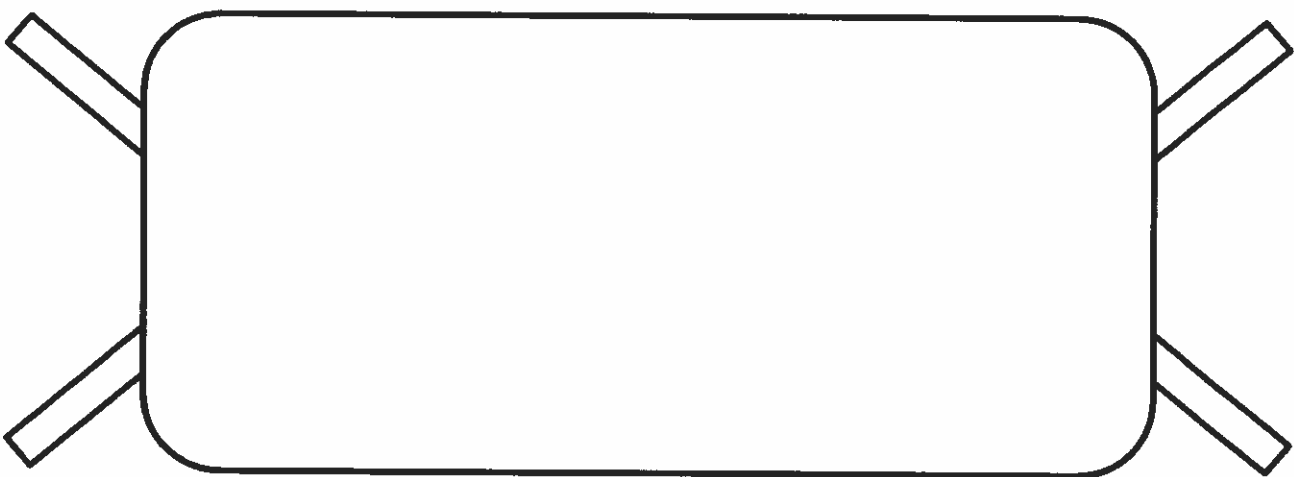
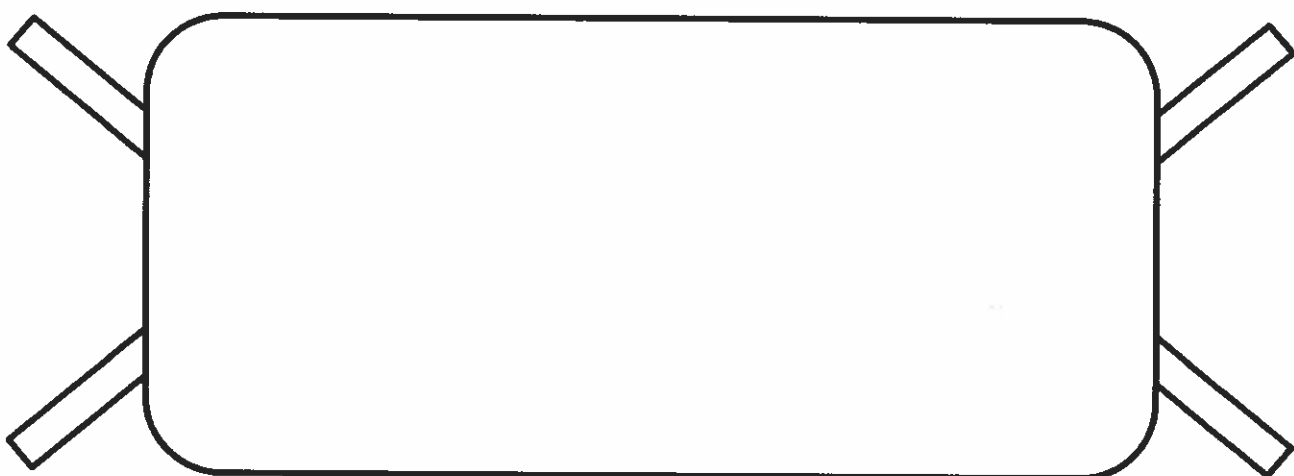
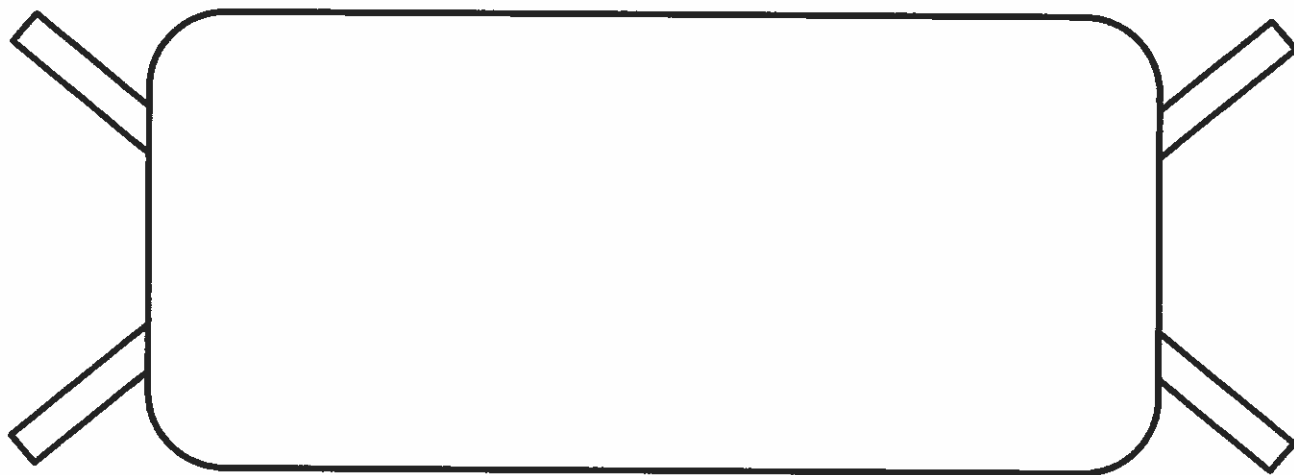


I can wear a face mask next time I leave the house.

Wearing a face mask keeps me from getting and spreading coronavirus.

It helps keep me and everyone else healthy and safe.

Try decorating pictures of these face masks
in ways that you like.



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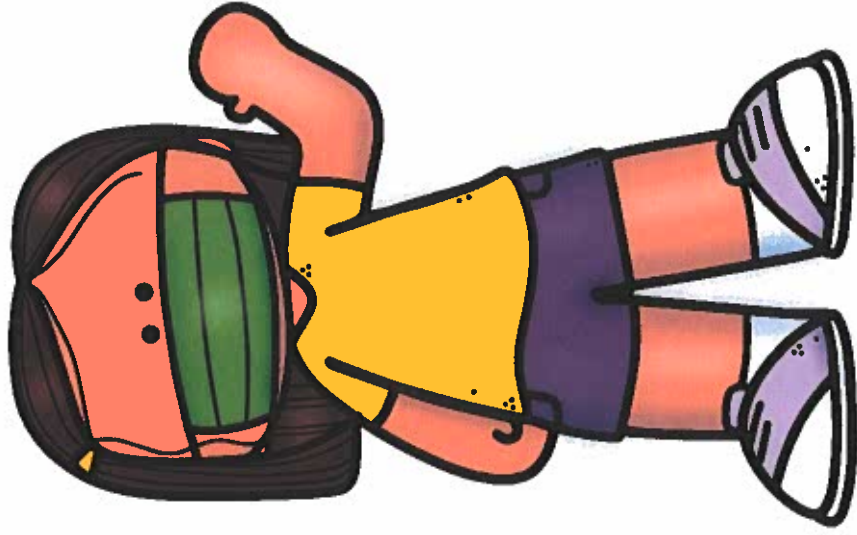
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Developed by Michaela Domaratzky, M.D. Candidate, Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in partnership with Children's Specialized Hospital and The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities, New Jersey Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Program (NJLEND).

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Cares♥

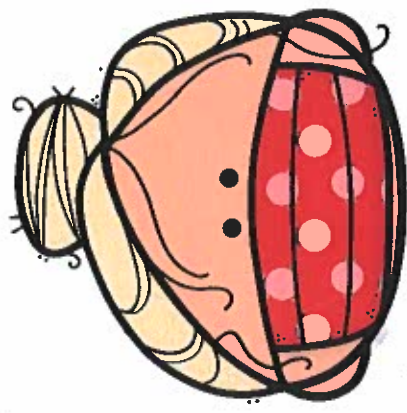
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wearing a mask to school



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1



My school wants kids and adults to wear masks. Masks come in all different colors.

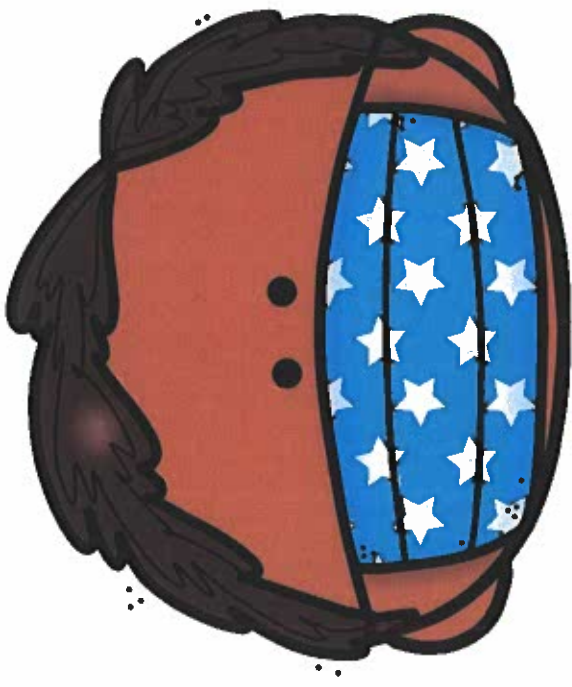
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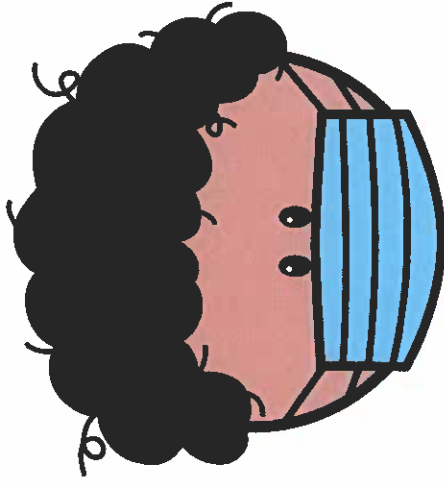
Wearing a mask helps prevent
us from spreading germs.

3



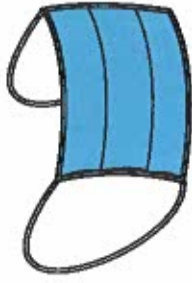
Wearing a mask might feel
uncomfortable at first.

4



When I put on my mask,
I should make sure it is
covering my nose and mouth.

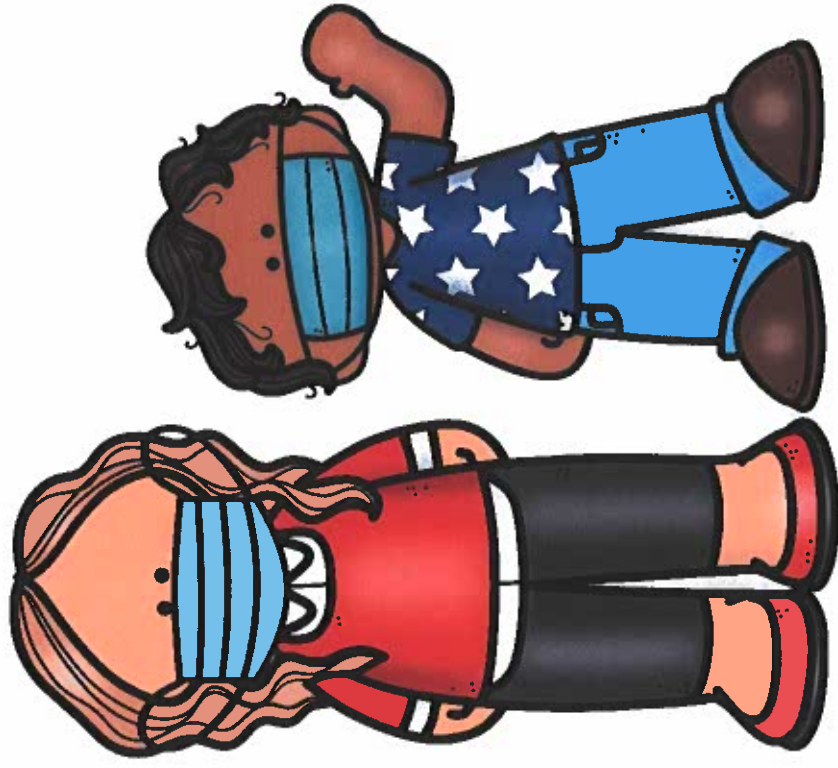
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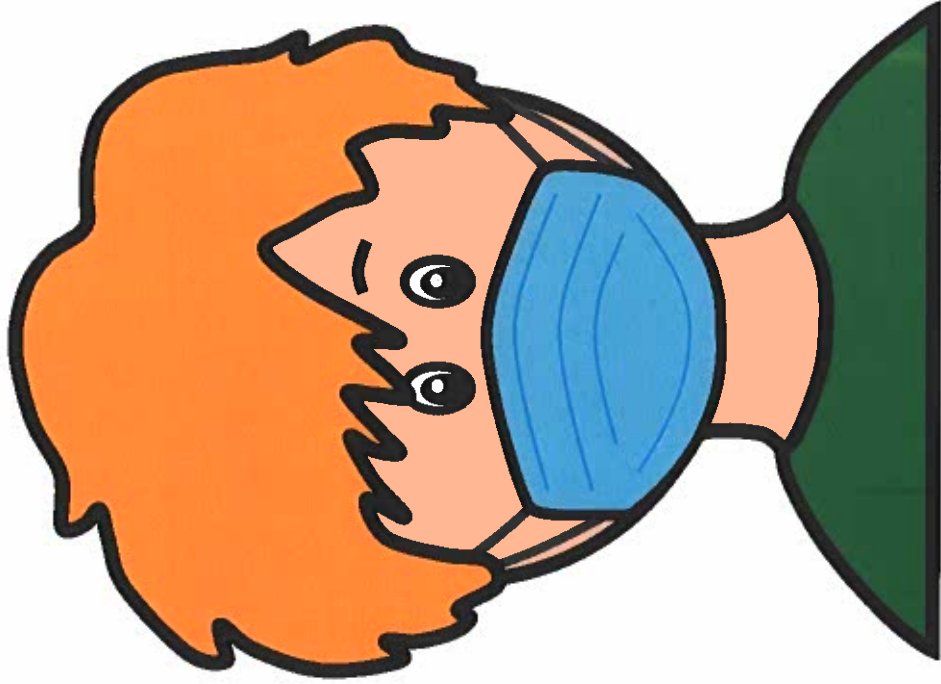
Some masks have elastic that
loops around a person's ears
and some tie in the back.



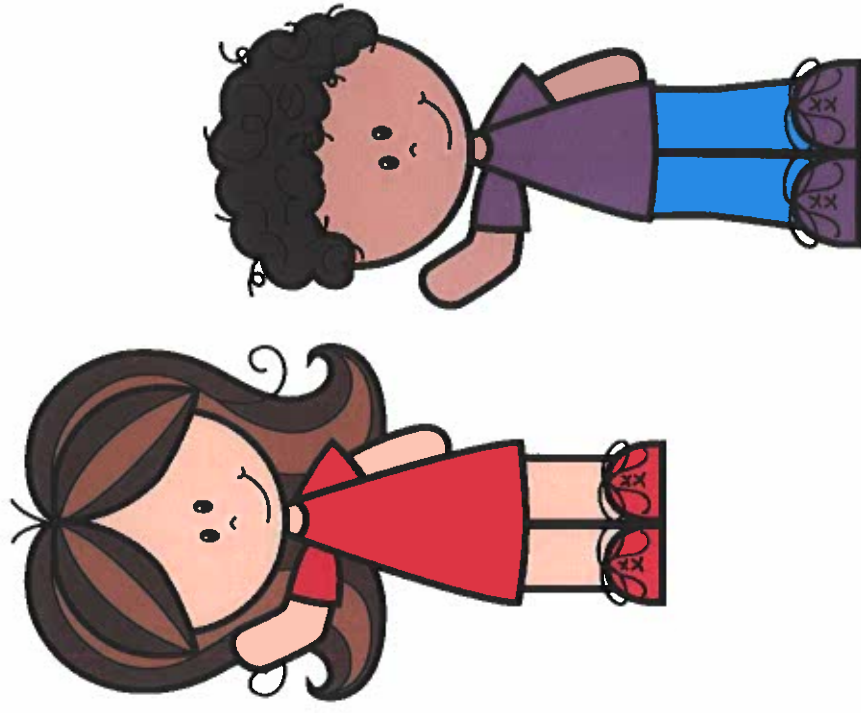
Even though I am wearing
a mask, I can still have fun
at school!



I can ask my teacher if
I need help with my mask.

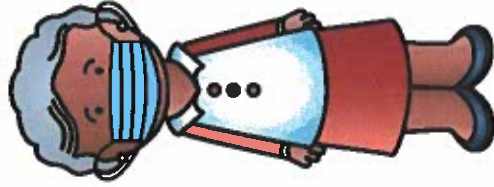


Wearing a mask at school
is different.

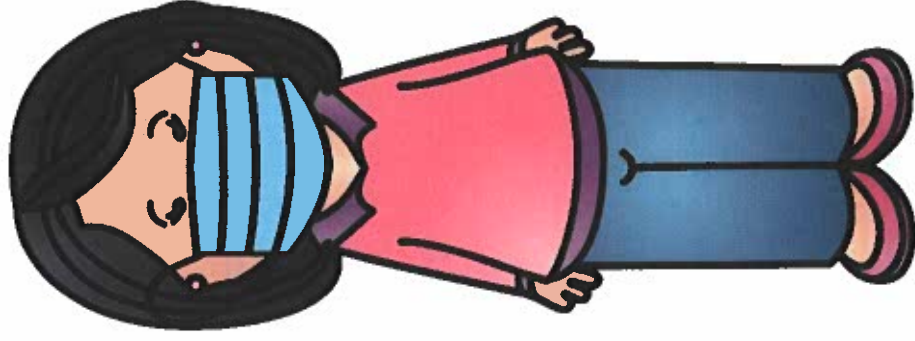
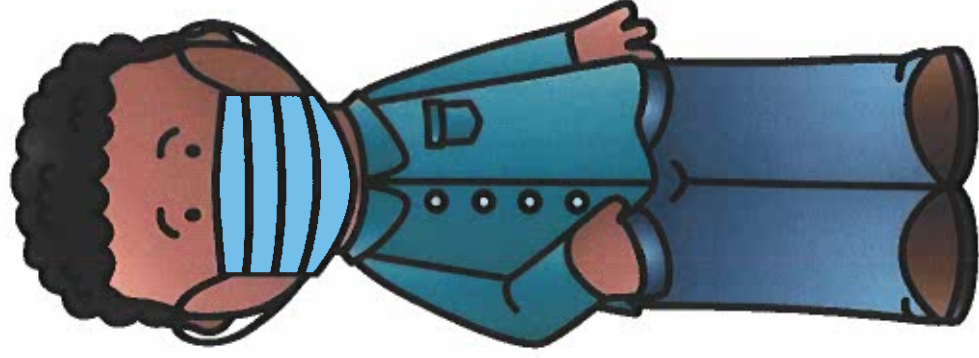


I can handle this change. We
all hope that Coronavirus goes
away soon and we won't
need to wear masks for
much longer.

Seeing other People wearing MASKS

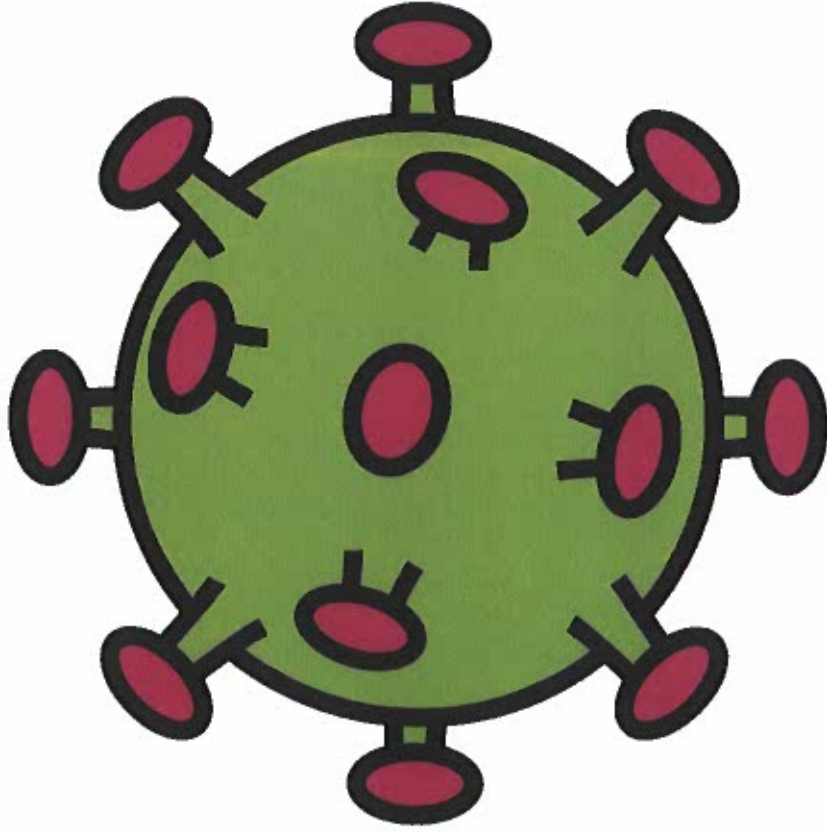


A story for children



Sometimes I might see people
wearing face masks at the store.

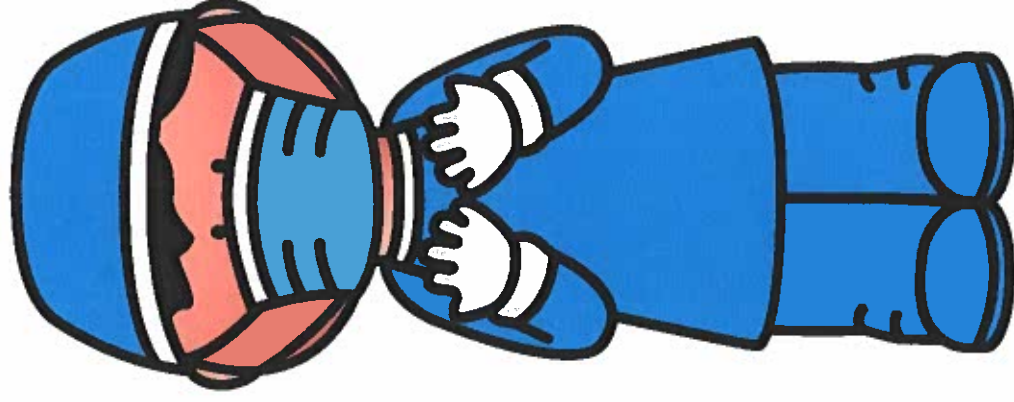
2



Wearing a mask at a store is a new thing. This is because of a germ called COVID-19.

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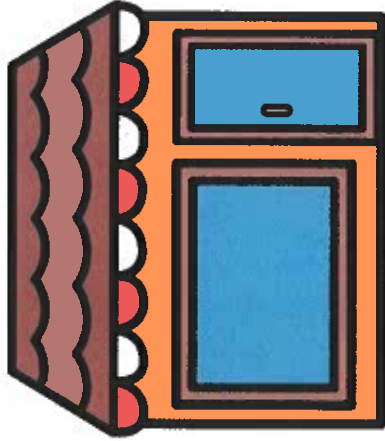
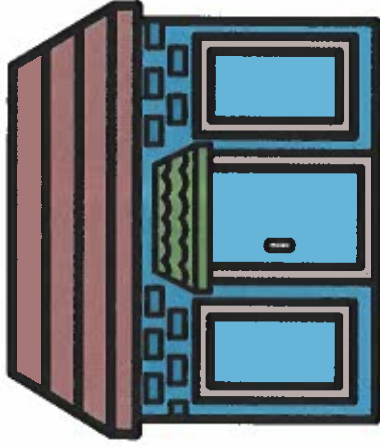
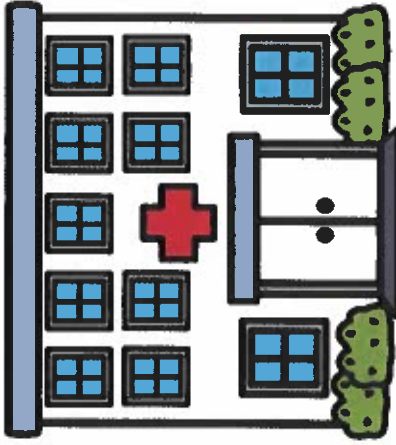
3



Before COVID-19, I usually only saw doctors and nurses wearing a face mask.

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4



Now, more people are wearing
them in different places. Not just
in a hospital!

5



In a store I will see some people
wearing a mask and some
people not wearing a mask.

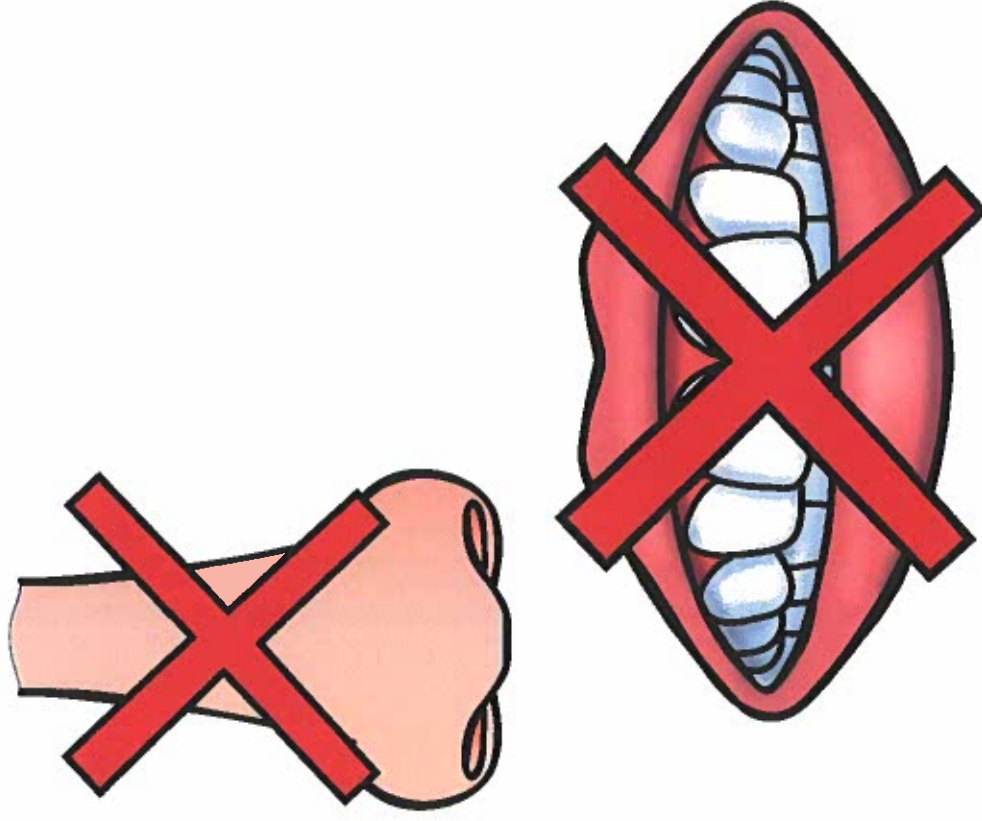
6



When somebody wears a mask,
I can only see their eyes.

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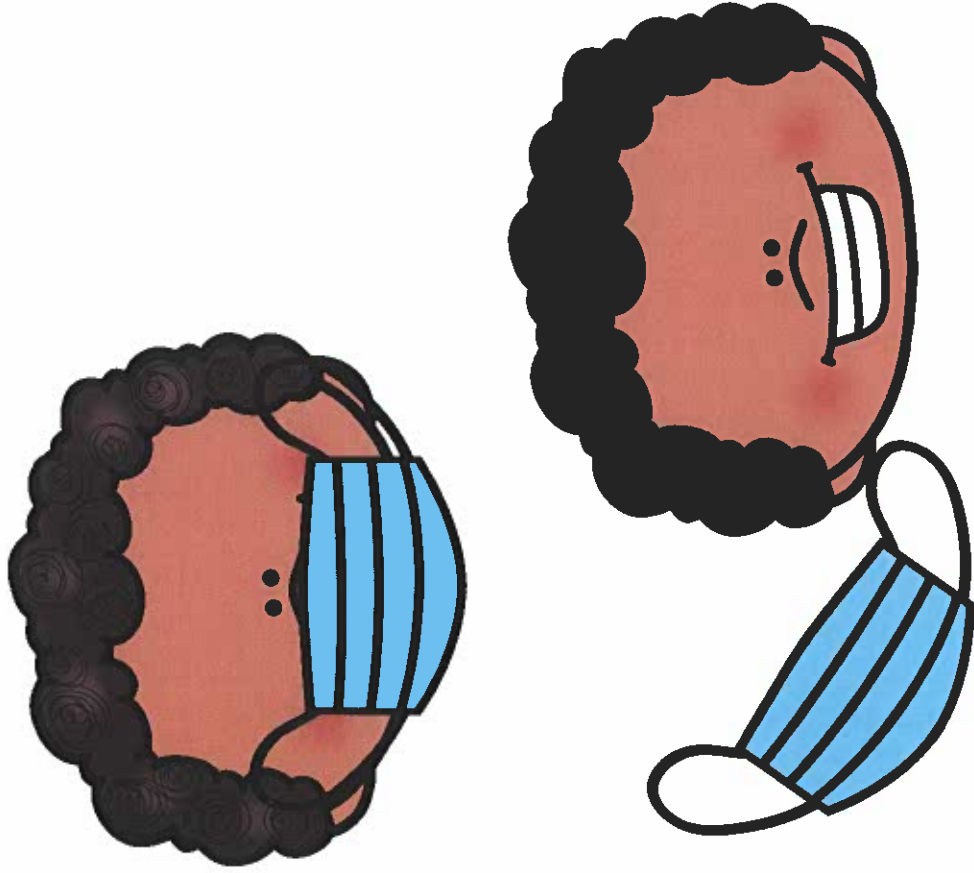
7



I won't be able to see their nose
or mouth. Their nose and mouth
are under the mask.

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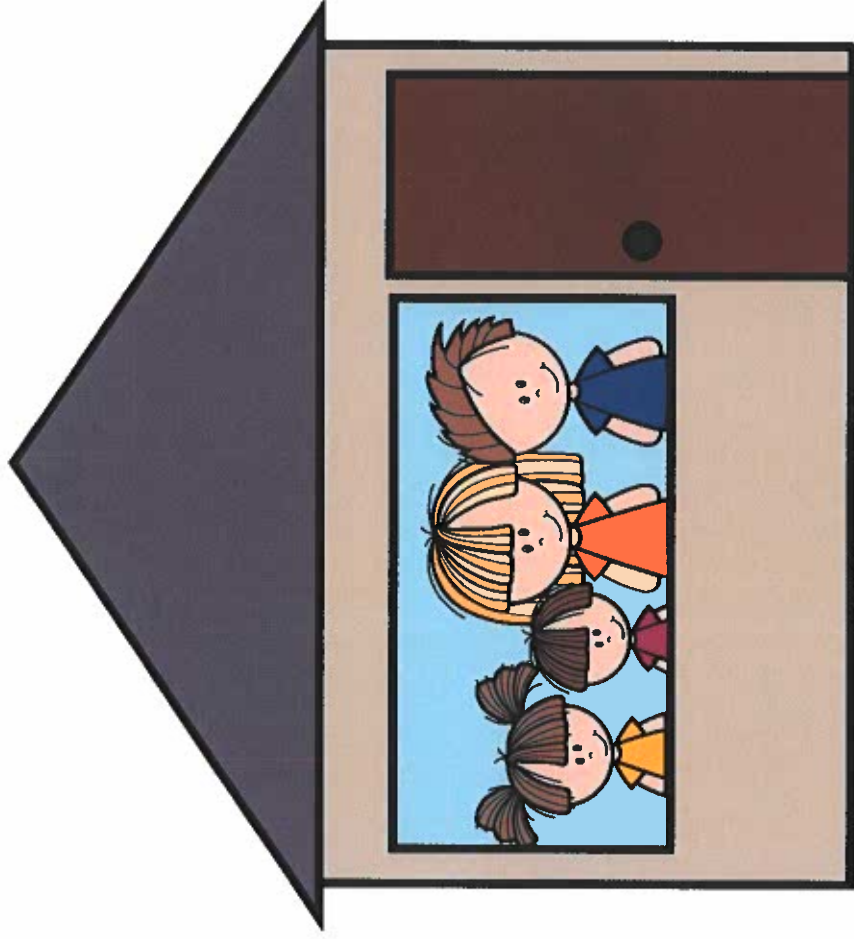
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The people wearing masks can still talk and they might even be smiling at me. I just can't see their mouth.

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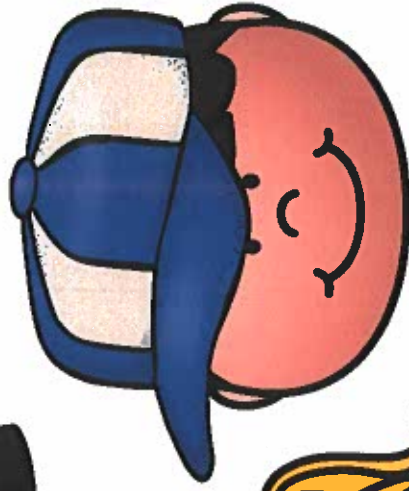
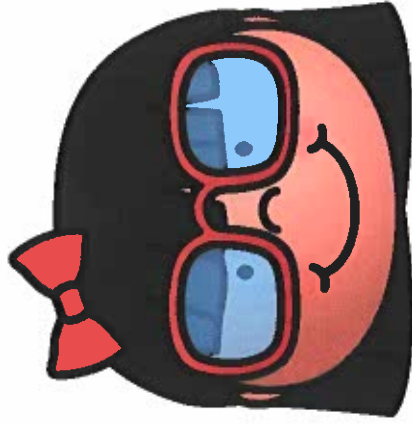
9



People wearing masks take them off when they get home. Then, their family can see their nose and mouth again!

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10



Some people wear glasses,
some people wear hats, and
some people wear masks.

11



Seeing people wearing masks is
different. But, it's okay!

I Can Wear a Face Mask!





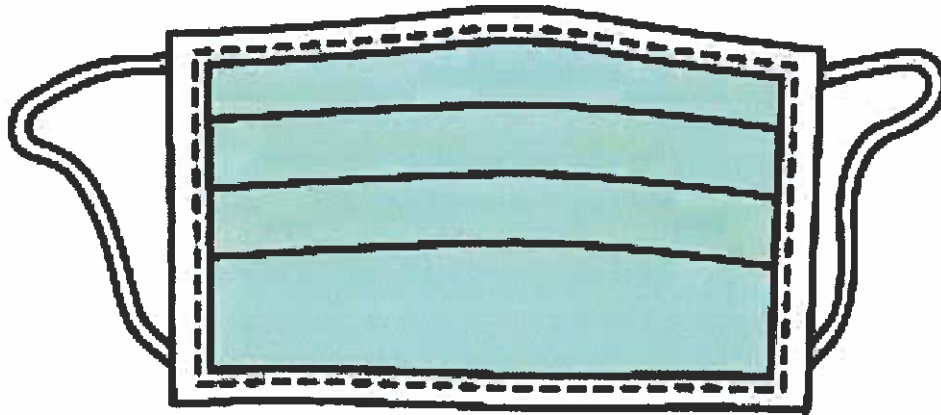
**A face mask, or covering, can protect me
from germs that can make me feel sick.**





**A face mask is something that covers my
mouth and nose, but I can still breathe. Kids
AND grownups can wear masks to stay
healthy.**





**Some face masks are
made from a paper-
like material.**





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**Some face masks are
made of cloth.**



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Boston, MA 02118



autismprogram@bmc.org



617.414.3842



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**Some people wear a
scarf or a bandana
instead of a face mask.**



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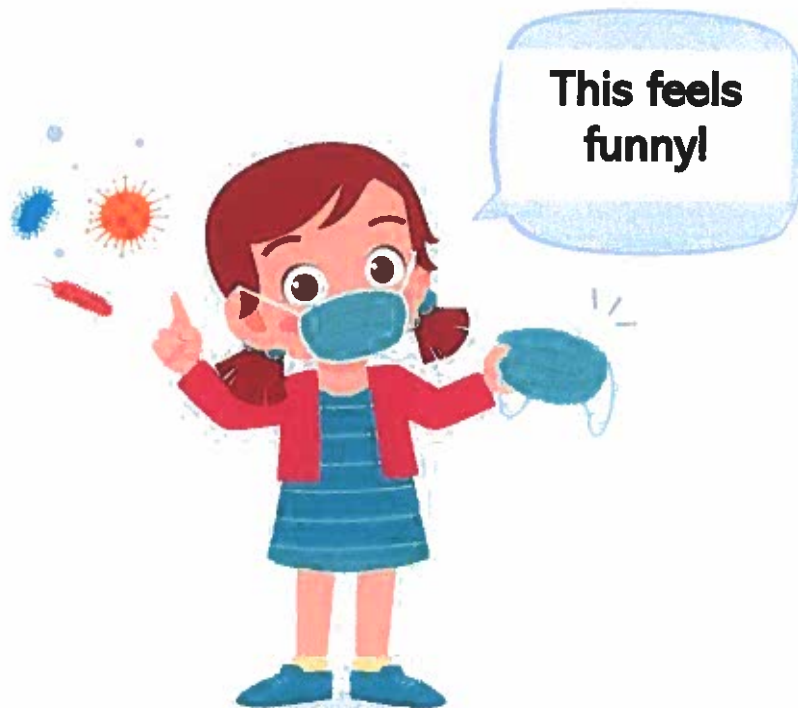


**Face masks or coverings can protect me
from germs that make me feel sick.**





**It might feel funny the first time I wear a
face mask. It might feel funny on my ears or
on my nose.**





**A grown up can help put on my mask, and
make it feel better on my face.**



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**I might need to practice wearing this. I can
even have my toys practice!**



**It is important to remember to listen to
grownups about the important rules for
wearing a mask.**



**To keep the germs away, it is important to
try and not touch my face.**



I can also keep my hands clean by washing them. I know how to wash my hands-and a grown up can help me.





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**My family will be so proud when I wear my face mask
and keep my hands clean!**



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I am staying healthy! Hooray!!



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MASKS

**Because of the Coronavirus,
people are wearing masks
to help them stay safe.**



**They are wearing masks out in
the community and even when
they stay at home.**



**I can wear a mask to help
protect me from getting sick .**



**If I am sick, wearing a mask will
help protect others
so they stay healthy.**



**The staff in my house may also
wear masks for protection.**



Stay at Home



I have to stay home.



My favorite places are not open.



People are getting each other sick.



People do not get sick if they stay at home.



So now all people need to stay home.



I can still go outside and go for walks.



I cannot be close to other people, but I can still talk to them.



One day, when it is safe, everything will open again and I will leave home.



The better we do at staying home, the sooner places will open again.

Don't Share Your Germs! A Social Story About Staying Healthy



It's important to share with your friends! We share toys, we share school supplies, and we may even share our snacks sometimes. But, it's important **NOT** to share germs!



Germs can make our bodies feel bad. We have germs when our noses are runny, when our tummies hurt, when our throats are scratchy, and when we are coughing and sneezing. We don't want to share these germs with our friends!

Luckily, there are lots of things we can do to **NOT** share germs.



We can wash away the germs on our hands! We should wash our hands after we use the bathroom, before we eat, before we play, and any time our parents and teachers remind us to.

We should also wash our hands after we eat, after we play, and after we come in from being outside. This will help to keep the germs away!



When we feel tickles in our throat and need to cough, we should cover our mouths with our elbows so we don't share germs. If we accidentally cough without covering our mouth, we should wash our hands right away.



If we aren't feeling well, we should wave to our friends and teachers and say "hi!" instead of high-fiving, hugging, or fist-bumping. This will help to make sure we don't share any germs!



And most importantly, if we are feeling bad, we should let our parents know right away. We may need to stay home from school until we feel better. Our friends will miss us but will be so excited to see us again when we come back!

So remember: Sharing toys with our friends is FUN but sharing our germs is NOT!

Helping Individuals with Autism Wear Face Masks

Individuals with autism are experiencing many new challenges brought on by COVID-19, including understanding social distancing practices and why people are wearing face masks.

Many individuals need specific types of support to adapt to this change, especially if they will have to wear face masks when they return to school or go out in the community. Autism New Jersey has heard from parents and professionals across the state who are concerned that individuals with highly restrictive tendencies and sensory sensitivities would understandably not want to wear a cloth face mask.

With many places and spaces reopening with a face-mask requirement, many are understandably worried that these obstacles may restrict full participation and inclusion in the community, school, and other indoor establishments and spaces. If you have these concerns, read our article: [Is my Child with Autism Required to Wear a Mask?](#)

Here are some suggestions and resources to help individuals with autism with wearing a face mask:

Explaining the Situation

While some individuals with autism can understand this health concern and tell you what they're thinking, others cannot. They may not understand the context of what is going on and why wearing a mask is mandatory in certain places. This may lead to confusion, resistance, and intense emotions. Choose a time when your child is calm to speak to them about what a face mask is, why it is required right now, and how to wear it.

BE CLEAR

Use concrete language when talking about the virus and why a mask is a protective boundary. For example, "Without our masks on, we could catch germs. We don't want to bring the virus home or give it to our friends and family." PBS News Hour recently offered some tips and a video for helping individuals with autism understand how to be healthy during COVID-19.

TRY A SOCIAL STORY

These are a tool to explain a challenging situation using a simple narrative and pictures. The Boggs Center and Children's Specialized Hospital offer a social story that may help: [I Can Stay Healthy by Wearing a Face Mask \(Spanish\)](#). Or you could create your own that is unique to your child.

USE ADDITIONAL VISUAL SUPPORTS

Two Way Street has created a [COVID-19 chat visual board](#) that provides a visual language display for augmentative and alternative communication devices (AAC). Even if your child doesn't use AAC, you could print it for the discussion. This [Support Understanding packet](#) includes resources, visual supports, social stories, and other suggestions to help your child understand social distancing practices.

Teaching Wearing a Face Mask

Since wearing a face mask may be highly aversive to individuals with ASD, introduce it as soon as possible to help them get used to it. Talk with your child's team about specific adaptations or suggestions to meet his or her unique needs.

STATE CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

“If-Then” and “First-Then” language may be helpful: “If we want to go to the store [or back to school], then we have to wear our face mask,” or “First, mask on. Then, outside.”

START SMALL

Prior to asking your child to wear the mask, some individuals may need to become familiar with it. Consider the following steps over time:

- Holding the mask
- Bringing the mask toward their face
- Touching the mask to the face
- Fitting the elastic over the ears
- Keeping it on for specified amounts of time

Once it is on, a visual timer (physical or an app) may help to indicate how much time remains (start with just a few seconds and work up). It may help if you wear one during these practices as well.

REINFORCE THE BEHAVIOR

Since this will likely be a big challenge, make it as motivating as possible.

- Provide a favorite reward as a consequence for keeping the mask on for a certain period of time (remember, start small).
- If your child is passionate about a certain topic, character, or movie, you could purchase a personalized mask. This article from TODAY offers ways to make wearing a mask more comfortable.
- Consider having him/her wear the mask to do a favorite activity (while playing a video game, swinging in the backyard, etc.) to get used to it. This can be a helpful distraction as well as helping it become more habit-forming.
- Have your first outing be very short and to a favorite place (a walk in the park, to buy their favorite meal at curbside pick-up, etc.).

GENERALIZATION

Once your child is tolerating the face mask, think of ways to expand the options so he or she doesn't learn just one narrow set of details. For example, have multiple masks so there is a second and third acceptable choice when one is in the laundry. Have different people ask him/her to wear the mask (other family members, a teacher on a video conference, etc.). Practice at different times and places.

Individuals with autism who cannot verbally express their frustration, confusion, or discomfort with the mask may exhibit aggression or other challenging behaviors. If so, consult with your child's team for more direct assistance.

Here is the entire list of education companies offering free subscriptions due to school closures

And, thanks to [Amazing Educational Resources](#), here is a full list of websites that will allow you to sign-up for **FREE** in order to help your child along with their education during this difficult period:

- [2Simple](#)
- [AdmitHub](#)
- [ABCmouse/Adventure Academy](#)
- [ALBERT](#)
- [Alchemie](#)
- [American Chemistry Society](#)
- [Backpack Sciences](#)
- [Boardmaker](#)
- [BookCreator App](#)
- [BrainPop](#)
- [Breakout Edu](#)
- [Buncee](#)
- [Century](#)
- [CheckMath](#)
- [CircleTime Fun](#)
- [CiscoWebex](#)
- [CK-12 Foundation](#)
- [ClassDojo](#)
- [Classroom Secrets](#)
- [ClassHook](#)
- [Classtime](#)
- [CMU CS Academy](#)
- [CommonLit](#)
- [Conjugemos](#)
- [Coursera for Campus](#)
- [Curriki](#)
- [Deck. Toys](#)
- [DeltaMath](#)
- [Discovery Ed](#)
- [Dyslexia Academy](#)
- [Ecoballot](#)
- [EdConnect](#)
- [Edmodo](#)
- [EdPuzzle](#)
- [Education Perfect](#)
- [Eduflow](#)
- [Edulastic](#)
- [Edu-Together](#)
- [ElementariEmile](#)
- [Epraise](#)

- [Epic!](#)
- [EverFi](#)
- [Explain Everything](#)
- [Fiveable](#)
- [Flipgrid](#)
- [Fluency Matters](#)
- [Freckle](#)
- [Free Math](#)
- [Gamilab](#)
- [Genially](#)
- [GoGuardian](#)
- [Good2Learn](#)
- [Google For Edu](#)
- [Gynzy](#)
- [Hapara](#)
- [Hawkes Learning](#)
- [HippoCampus](#)
- [Ideas Roadshow](#)
- [IDEA](#)
- [InThinking](#)
- [i-Ready](#)
- [Izzit.org](#)
- [Kahoot](#)
- [Kami](#)
- [KET's PBS Learning Media](#)
- [Khan Academy](#)
- [Kids Discover Online](#)
- [Kognity](#)
- [LabsLand](#)
- [Learning Apps](#)
- [Libby App](#)
- [ListenWise](#)
- [Manga High](#)
- [Microsoft Education](#)
- [Minecraft: Education Edition](#)
- [MobyMax](#)
- [Mozi](#)
- [MusicFirst](#)
- [Mystery Science](#)
- [NearPod](#)
- [Newsela](#)
- [Nimbus Capture](#)
- [Outschool](#)
- [Otus](#)
- [Packback](#)
- [Parlay](#)
- [Pear Deck](#)
- [PebbleGo By Capstone](#)
- [Peergrade](#)
- [PenPal](#)
- [Prodigy](#)
- [Pronto](#)

- [Rockalingua](#)
- [Salesforce](#)
- [ScienceWerkz](#)
- [Schoology](#)
- [ScreenCastify](#)
- [Seesaw](#)
- [Seneca](#)
- [Seterra Geography](#)
- [Shmoop](#)
- [Sight Reading Suite](#)
- [SmartMusic](#)
- [Stemscopes](#)
- [Storyboard](#)
- [Tailor-ED](#)
- [TechSmith](#)
- [Tes Blendspace](#)
- [Twinkl](#)
- [Typing Club](#)
- [Vidcode](#)
- [ViewSonic](#)
- [Voces Digital](#)
- [Vroom App](#)
- [Wakelete](#)
- [We Video](#)
- [Zearn](#)
- [Zoom](#)



Credit: Pexels

And don't worry if you've never homeschooled before, because there are plenty of blogs and websites out there offering tips and tricks to help make learning at home as fun and educational as possible. Here are some of our favorites:

- [Homeschooling-Ideas](#)
- [Dreambox](#)
- [The Survival Mom](#)
- [Scholastic](#)
- [ThoughtCo](#)