

BACK TO SCHOOL WITH A MASK

School will look different this year, with changes that include wearing a mask regularly. Here are some tips for helping your child wear a mask for school.



Key Ideas:

1. Good Mask Fit

What does a good mask fit look like?



It Fits

- A poorly fitting mask is hard to get used to wearing and encourages children to touch their mask, risking contamination
- Young children often need smaller masks
- It must fit firmly over the nose and at the sides of the face
- It should be adjusted to avoid fogging up glasses



It's Fun

- Use fun colors, characters or a favorite superhero
- Many masks are made just for children. Let your child help choose the look, as well as the fit. You may have to trial different masks to find the right one.



It's Comfortable

- It should not hurt to wear it. Common pressure points are behind the ears and on the nose.
- It should not cause any marks or break down your child's skin.



It's Breathable

- Masks should have 3-4 fine textured cotton layers but not be too thick or hot.



It's Safe

- Be sure that straps, decorations or small parts are not a choking or strangulation hazard



Key Ideas:

2. Adjusting to wearing a mask:

Daily, gradual practice is the most successful way for children to adjust to new changes such as wearing face masks.

It is important to increase the mask wearing time as your child adjusts to their mask, as they will be required to wear it for most of their school day.

The How and When to practice:

HOW

Start by having your child wear their mask so it only covers their mouth. This allows them time to adjust to the feel of the mask on their face, while still breathing through their nose.

Once they are comfortable, progress to having the mask cover both their nose and their mouth. This can take time for some children, and should not be rushed.

WHEN

Your child should first practice wearing their mask while doing quieter, fun/distracting activities indoors e.g. playing a board game, reading a favorite book. As they become comfortable, they can wear their mask while being more active, gradually increasing to activities such as walking or skipping.



Key Ideas:

3. Daily Practice

Your child should practice wearing their mask **daily** to get used to it before starting school.

Have your child pick the most comfortable time of day and stick to the schedule they choose.

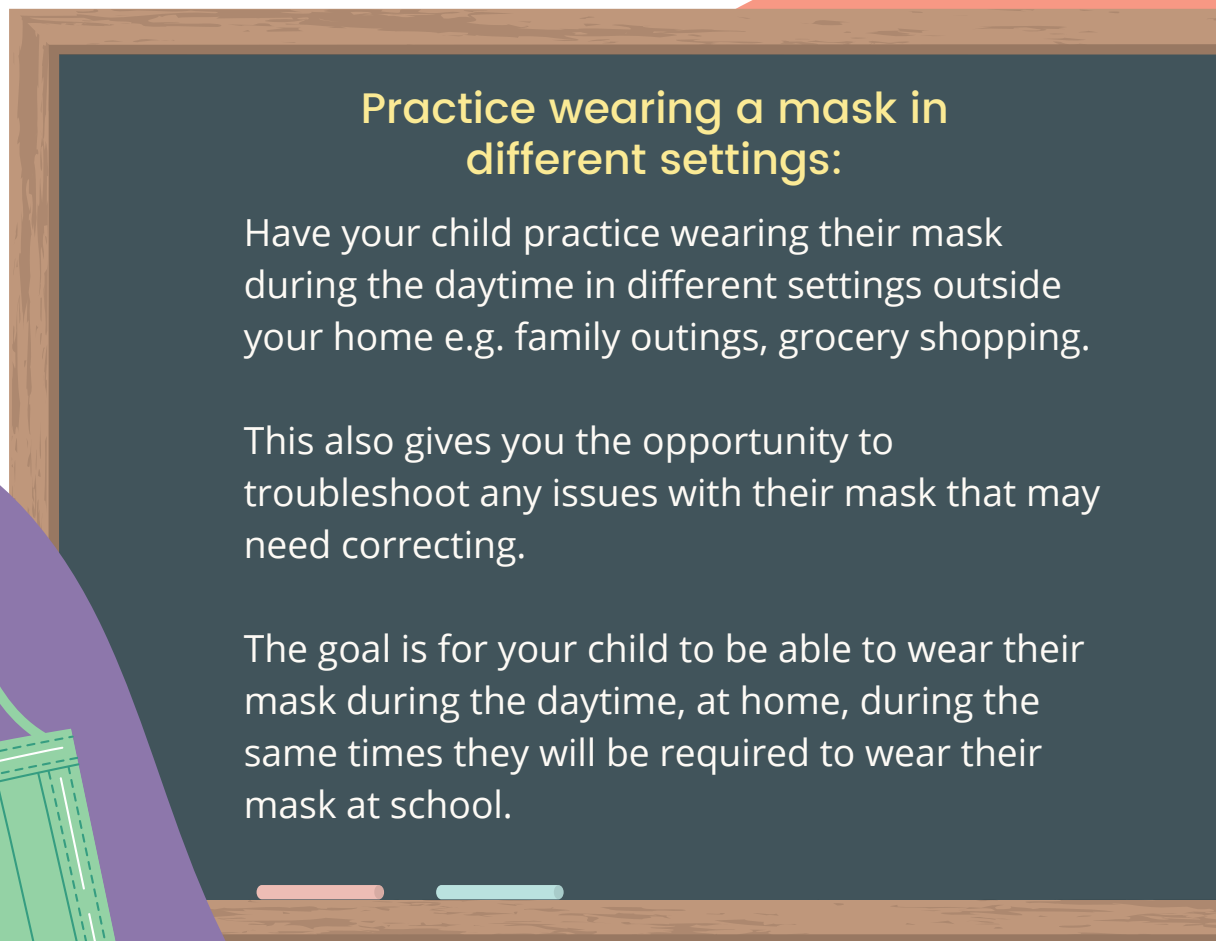
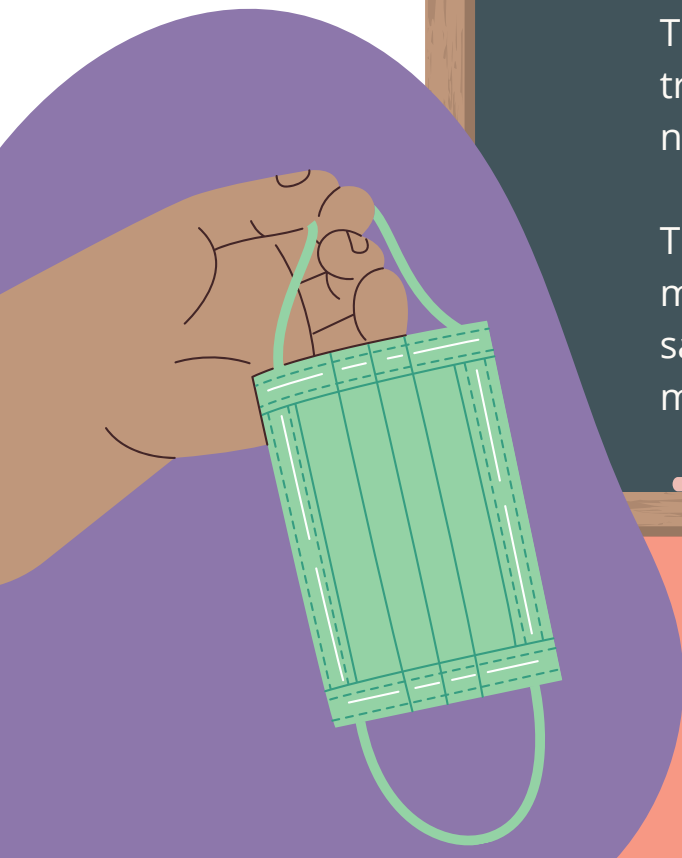
Help your child understand that this daily practice time is a “non-negotiable” activity, meaning they have to do it every day.

Practice wearing a mask in different settings:

Have your child practice wearing their mask during the daytime in different settings outside your home e.g. family outings, grocery shopping.

This also gives you the opportunity to troubleshoot any issues with their mask that may need correcting.

The goal is for your child to be able to wear their mask during the daytime, at home, during the same times they will be required to wear their mask at school.



Techniques to help your child adjust to wearing a face mask:

The strategies you choose will depend on your child's age, developmental stage and motivation. You know your child best, but here are some ideas to consider:

Incentives

Many children respond well to positive messages such as “great work at practicing wearing your mask today!” or “You wore your mask a lot today – good for you!”

Children also respond well to incentives like stickers. Reward charts can be used to track the time their mask is worn each day, with a prize or treat after they have reached a set goal (they get to choose an agreed upon prize/ treat before starting the chart)



Techniques to help your child adjust to wearing a face mask:

Role playing/ Role modelling with parents and siblings:

Children of all ages like to fit in and look to parents and siblings as role models. Older siblings and parents can show how they wear a face mask, and also the proper way to put on and take off their mask.

Practice putting on and taking off face masks together
Practice wearing masks together at home – you can make a game out of it if your child likes games.

Talk about what you like about your mask and why you wear it (“My mask protects you, and your mask protects me”)

Talk about the things that are difficult about wearing a mask, and things you tried that made it easier

Talk about how your child’s teachers, principal, and all of their friends will also be wearing masks at school. Remind them “We Are All In This Together”.

It is important not to create a fear around mask wearing. Present it as a new and necessary habit that we all need to practice in order to stay healthy during COVID.



Special considerations:

Children with sensory issues: If your child has sensory issues, getting used to a face mask may take longer, and be more challenging. Try using techniques that are successful for getting them to do other necessary activities e.g. brushing teeth, wearing glasses, etc. Again daily, consistent, gradual practice is key.

Mask storage: Check with your child's school about specific instructions for mask storage when masks are taken off during the school day. Practicing safe mask storage during home mask practices will also help your child know what to do with their mask at school.

Additional Links:

Wear a mask like a health hero. A great resource!

https://www.uab.edu/medicine/phts/images/covid-19/ACTION_COVID19_Masks_FINAL20200508.pdf

How to put on your mask:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwAR0f6nmUv8Wnoa9qFcluG4wsE71KaqjBG0ryZfwoy8njDDiEV-tE-Zhm58&feature=youtu.be&v=WdiiYy5LE4&app=desktop>

Alberta Health and Health Canada recommendations on appropriate face coverings:

<https://www.alberta.ca/masks.aspx>
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

General information on COVID-19

<https://www.ualberta.ca/alberta-respiratory-centre/covid19-links.html>

Acknowledgements

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Nursing, University of Alberta

Translating Evidence in Child Health to Enhance Outcomes (ECHO
Research).



2020