



Ohio Children's Hospital Association

Saving, protecting and enhancing children's lives



American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™



Ohio Chapter

The Ohio Children's Hospital Association (OCHA) and the Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (Ohio AAP) join together in support of the wearing of face coverings/masks in our hospitals, schools, and communities. Coronavirus (COVID-19) affects individuals differently and many can be infected with the virus without realizing it – an asymptomatic infection. Wearing a face covering/mask reduces the chances of an infected individual passing the virus onto others, but only if worn properly, covering both one's nose and mouth. Use of a mask is an important component of COVID-19 control, along with regular hand washing and physical distancing.

Families may have mixed feelings of their children wearing face coverings/masks and wonder if their child should be exempt from the practice.

OCHA supports the AAP's and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guidelines for children's use of face coverings/masks.

OCHA recommends all children wear face coverings/masks when returning to school consistent with AAP and CDC guidelines – *and specifically children in grades K-12* – with the following exemptions:

1. Children under the age of 2 years
2. Any child unable to remove the face covering without assistance
3. A child with a significant behavioral/psychological issue undergoing treatment that is exacerbated specifically by the use of a facial covering (e.g. severe anxiety or a tactile aversion)
4. A child living with severe autism or with extreme developmental delay who may become agitated or anxious wearing a mask
5. A child with a facial deformity that causes airway obstruction

Beyond these categories, there are no diagnoses that warrant blanket exemptions from wearing a face covering/mask. Specifically, asthma, allergies and sinus infections are not a contraindication for using a face covering/mask.

Families may struggle to get their child to wear a face covering/mask. The challenges to accomplishing this for their child may lead them to seek an inappropriate exemption for the child upon returning to school. The AAP provides helpful tips to normalize mask wearing and make your child feel more comfortable.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/Cloth-Face-Coverings-for-Children-During-COVID-19.aspx>

Wearing masks is crucial to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Almost all people, including young children, can wear face coverings and surgical/cloth masks safely.