

Masking your kids during COVID-19

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Do you or don't you wear a mask? If you do, what material is best? And what about children?

Questions around [masks](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic abound, especially in light of the recent recommendation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that all Americans wear masks in public settings.

"The direction around face masks has changed really quickly over the last several weeks. Now the guidance is [face masks](#) for all people, including [children](#) older than the age of 2, when out in public," says Dr. Tina Ardon, a family medicine physician at Mayo Clinic.

Given that most information around masks has been geared toward adults, Dr. Ardon says it's important to understand what children need.

Children younger than 2 should not be masked.

"Although we want to protect our littlest babies, newborns or children younger than 2 have small airways, and we don't want to obstruct their

breathing," says Dr. Ardon. She recommends using a baby carrier or sling if you need to bring an infant out in public as another means of protection.

Cloth is best.

"My recommendation is to always use cloth masks because they can be more comfortable for youngsters," Dr. Ardon says.

Size and fit are also important.

"Because our children come in different sizes, it is important to find a mask that is not too big or too tight. And to ensure that the mask covers their nose and mouth," she says.

Remind children that even with a mask, they should avoid touching their face.

"You may want to practice masking at home before you go out, so your kids can get used to having it on their face," she adds.

As far as when to mask, Dr. Ardon says parents should look to the guidelines around social distancing and continue to avoid large gatherings, including play dates.

"Some families might feel like they can do certain things with others as long as they're wearing a mask. The intent with more universal masking is to have another layer of protection for ourselves and for our communities if you have to be out in public at the grocery or at a doctor's office, for instance.

"If you are going for a walk in the neighborhood, and you know that you're going to be able to walk safely and not be around other groups of people in the neighborhood, a mask is necessary," she says. "However, I would say now is still not a good time to play on those play dates."

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