



Kids Safety Guide

Teaching Kids about Masks

The CDC recommends masks for everyone during the coronavirus pandemic, even for children, in public spaces or when around people that aren't in your household.

Masks should not be worn by children under 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance. Never wear a mask meant for a health care worker; surgical masks and N95 masks are in short supply and should be saved for first responders. The CDC does not recommend masks with an exhalation valve or vent.

WHY WE WEAR MASKS

Masks aren't intended to keep you from getting COVID-19. They are meant to limit your ability to spread the disease if you are infected and don't know it. Remember to teach your children what 6 feet looks like, and tell them to always keep that distance from others.

Another good tip is to teach them to wash their hands carefully using soap and warm water for 20 seconds. That's about two rounds of "Happy Birthday." Use hand sanitizer before you go into and after you come out of public places.



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HOW TO WEAR A MASK

Before putting on your mask, wash your hands thoroughly using soap and warm water. Then, put the mask over your nose and mouth and secure it under your chin. Make sure the mask fits snugly against the side of your face and that you can breathe eas-

ily. The mask should cover both your nose and mouth at all times.

Don't put the mask on your forehead or around your neck and don't touch the mask. If you do, wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.

Once you're safely home or in the car, remove the mask

by untying the strings behind your head or stretching out the ear loops. Handle the mask only by the ear loops or ties, then fold the outside corners together. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose and mouth when removing the mask and then wash your hands immediately.

MASKS AT SCHOOL

Kids should keep their masks on as required at school. Tell them not to pull it down, touch it or trade with their friends. Masks should be treated like underwear and washed and dried daily. If your child has a favorite mask, consider investing in more than one.

Pandemic Mental Health

The pandemic, not to mention everything else 2020 has thrown out, has taken a toll on everyone's mental health. Mental health changes can look different in children than they do in adults.

Here are some things to keep an eye on in your children.

WATCH FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGES

Look for excessive crying or irritation in younger children. Older children may act out more and be more irritable. Younger children may also revert to behaviors they've outgrown, such as bed wetting.

All ages might have excessive worry or sadness, moping, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, poor school performance, difficulty paying attention or concentrating, avoiding activities they previously enjoyed, and unexplained headaches or sickness. For teens, keep an eye out for alcohol, tobacco or drug use.

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILDREN

Talk with your kids about COVID-19, civil unrest, natural disasters and everything else happening in 2020. Answer their questions and talk to them in a way they can



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understand. Always reassure your child that they are safe and that it's OK if they're angry or upset. Share with them the ways you deal with stress in your own life and make sure you're modeling good behavior for them.

It may also help to limit your family's exposure to news coverage of stressful events, including social

media. Children can easily misinterpret what they hear and see. Try to keep your family in a regular routine, even if school and work routines are disrupted. Spend time with your children doing meaningful activities. Take a hike or even just a walk around the neighborhood. Read a book. Play a board game.

WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

If you or someone in your family is having a mental health crisis, call 911 to get immediate assistance. You can also get help through these resources:

- The Disaster Distress Helpline at 800-985-5990.
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK.

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233.

- The National Child Abuse Hotline at 800-422-4453.

- The National Sexual Assault Hotline at 800-656-HOPE.

- The Eldercare Locator at 800-677-1116.

- The Veteran's Crisis Line at 800-273-TALK.

Being Safe Online

Today's kids are more connected than any other generation before, which makes keeping them safe from cyberbullying, online predators and other internet threats more important than ever before.

Follow these tips from the Federal Trade Commission to keep your kids surfing safely.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is bullying or harassment that happens online, whether it's in a text message, on a game or on social media. It can involve threats, spreading rumors, posting or sharing images, or creating a group or page to make a person feel left out.

Tell your kids that they can't hide, even online. Hurtful messages don't just make the target feel bad, they can backfire on the sender. They can lose friends, get a bad reputation or even be punished by the authorities. Your kids should let you know if anyone sends them a message that makes them feel threatened or hurt. Check your kids' electronics from time to time to make sure they aren't receiving any threatening messages. Encourage your kids to, if they see cyberbullying, tell the bully to stop and to let you know so that you can save the evidence and let



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the right people know.

If your kids encounter a bully, tell them not to react and to let you know immediately. If the bullying persists, be prepared to contact school officials or local authorities. Your child can also block or delete the bully across all their platforms.

COMPUTER SAFETY

Tell your children to guard their personal information carefully. Don't share addresses, phone numbers, Social Security or other account numbers, or passwords with strangers. They shouldn't download anything unless it's from a trusted source and

passes a security software scan. Teach them the difference between a strong password and a weak password. Longer passwords are more difficult to crack, and personal information should never be used in a password.

Phishing scams are when scam artists send emails, texts

or messages to try to get people to share their personal information. Tell your kids not to reply to text, email or other messages that ask for personal or financial information, and never follow a link in such a message. Be careful about opening any attachments or downloading files from emails.

Children and Screen Time

As the pandemic hit and parents started juggling school and work at home, along with their regular responsibilities, children started spending more and more time on screens.

Tablets, television, phones and laptops all worked overtime — and still are. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry says that, on average, children spend four to six hours a day watching screens. Teenagers can spend up to nine hours.

TOO MUCH SCREEN TIME

The AACAP says that too much screen time can lead to:

- Sleep problems.
- Lower grades in school.
- Reading fewer books.
- Less time with family and friends.
- Not enough outdoor or physical activity.

- Weight problems.
- Mood problems.
- Poor self-image and body issues.
- Fear of missing out.
- Less time learning other ways to relax and have fun.

In order to avoid these problems, come up with a plan for managing your child's screen time. The AACAP offers guidelines for children of all ages.



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SCREEN TIME PLANS

It can be tough to manage screen time. Remember, screens are here to stay and can offer many advantages. Let your children share their ideas and concerns about screen time, but also keep these guidelines in mind.

• **Until 18 months of age:** Limit screen use to video chatting with an adult, like a

FaceTime session with a parent who is out of town.

• **18-24 months of age:** Screen time should be limited to educational program with a caregiver.

• **2-5 years old:** Limit non-educational screen time to about one hour per weekday and three hours on weekends.

• **Ages 6 and up:** Encourage healthy habits and limit activ-

ities that include screens.

Remember to turn off screens during family meals and outings and to use parental controls. Avoid using screens as pacifiers, babysitters or to stop tantrums. And turn off all the screens and take them out of the bedroom 30-60 minutes before bedtime.

You should also keep

abreast of what shows your children are watching and talk to them about what they are seeing. Point out good behaviors and discuss bad ones.

Set a good example with your own screen habits and teach your child about online and privacy and security — even televisions are online these days.

Outdoor Safety

Kids like to keep moving and a lot of that happens outside. Biking, hiking, playing sports, swimming and just playing outside are great activities, but they also offer lots of opportunities to get hurt.

Keep reading for some ways to keep your kids safe during these activities.

BIKING

When taking to the road, kids should wear proper safety equipment, including a helmet that fits them correctly. Teach your children to adjust the straps on helmets and pads themselves and show them how to get the correct fit. Also make sure your children know the rules of the road when bicycling. These include:

- Ride in the same direction as cars.
- Stop at and obey traffic lights.
- Watch for cars turning, leaving driveways and opening doors.
- Don't ride on sidewalks.
- Don't horse around or get distracted while riding.

PLAYING SPORTS

Sports can be a lot of fun. Your children get regular exercise, can make new friends and learn the importance of teamwork and friendly com-



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petition. But they can also get injured. Here are some tips to stay safe while playing sports.

- Always wear the proper gear, including footwear, helmets and protective eyewear.
- Learn the rules of the game and don't push yourself to play above your skill level.
- Warm up and stretch before playing to avoid strains

and sprains, and cool down when you're done.

- Report injuries right away.

HIKING

It can be relaxing and rejuvenating to get out in nature. But you can also get hurt — and may be far from help when it happens. Make sure children know not to run

ahead on the trail and how to spot landmarks on your way. Children should also know common poisonous plants, such as poison ivy, and insects, such as ticks. Stay safe while hiking by doing the following:

- Watch the weather and having a good forecast before you leave.
- Dress appropriately for the

weather in clothes to keep your kids warm, dry and safe from the sun.

- Pack an extra blanket or an extra change of clothes.
- Comfortable, broken-in hiking shoes.
- Basic first-aid supplies.
- Sunscreen.
- Water and food, more than you think you'll need.

Staying Safe Around Animals

Children love animals, and many kinds of animals love being around children. Some don't, however, and some others can post a danger without meaning to or knowing it.

Here are some ways to keep your children safe around animals.

BE HEALTHY

Young children can actually get sick from contact with animals. Young children — those under 5 — often touch surfaces that can be contaminated with animal poop and then put their hands in their mouths. They are also less likely to wash their hands well and can get a serious illness from germs that animals carry.

Always supervise your children when they're around animals, whether the animals are familiar to you or not. Don't allow children to kiss animals or put their hands or other objects into their mouths after touching animals, and wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after touching, feeding or caring for animals.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that children under 5 avoid contact with reptiles, such as lizards, snakes and



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turtles; amphibians such as frogs, toads, newts and salamanders; backyard poultry, including baby chicks and ducklings; and rodents such as mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils and guinea pigs.

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE AROUND DOGS

They're man's best friend, but not all dogs are friendly or

want to be petted. Here are some tips from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that your children should learn to keep them safe around dogs.

- Ask permission before petting someone's dog.
- Don't tease a dog or pull on its leash.
- Don't try to take a dog's food or toys.

- Don't try to pet a dog through a fence.

- Don't bother a mother dog with her puppies.

- If a loose dog comes up to you, stand still like a statue.

- If a dog knocks you down, curl into a ball and cover your ears.

- Don't look a dog directly in the face, especially dogs you don't know.

TREATING ANIMAL BITES

If an animal bites your child, wash the wound immediately with warm, soapy water. Seek medical attention if the animal appears sick, if you don't know if it has been vaccinated against rabies, the wound is serious, the wound becomes red or swollen, if it has been more than 5 years since the child's last tetanus shot.



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Dealing with Peer Pressure

The latest dance, the latest fashion and the latest music — your kids’ friends influence them in all kinds of ways.

Most of them are great (well, unless we count the return of 1980s fashion), but some of them are more nefarious. Your kids’ friends can also push them to skip class, use drugs or alcohol, cheat on tests, share inappropriate material online and more.

WHY DOES IT WORK?

Remember that peer pressure has an

upside. It’s natural and OK for kids to rely on their friends. Their friends can push them to try new things like new books or developing new skills. Just like in negative peer pressure situations, kids give in because they want to fit in with their social group. They want to be liked and don’t want to be left out.

WHAT YOUR KIDS CAN DO

Some tips from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry include:

- Stay away from peers who pressure you to do things that seem wrong or dangerous.
- Practice saying no to get out of or

avoid situations that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

- Spend time with other kids who resist peer pressure.
- Have at least one friend who is willing to say no.
- Talk with a trusted grown up, such as a parent, teacher or school counselor.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Keep lines of communication open with your child so that you can quickly recognize when your child is having a problem with peer pressure. You can also do the following:

- Teach your child to be assertive and resist getting involved in dangerous or

inappropriate situations or activities.

- Get to know your child’s friends and share any concerns you have with their parents.
- Know how your child interacts with friends and others online. Teach them about internet safety and appropriate social media use.
- Help your child develop self-confidence because kids who feel good about themselves are less vulnerable to peer pressure.
- Develop backup plans to help kids get out of uncomfortable or dangerous situations. Let them know, for example, that you’ll always come get them if they feel worried or unsafe.