Wearing Face Masks During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Strategies to Overcome Sensory Issues

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April 23, 2020 from 12-1 PM

https://mssm.zoom.us/j/98261469115 Meeting ID: 982 6146 9115



Agenda

Introductions

- Michelle Gorenstein, PsyD
- Jessica Zweifach, PhD
- Andi Sachs, MS, OTR/L
- What is Sensory Processing?
- Face Masks and Sensory Processing Difficulties
- Strategies to Support Use of Facemasks
- Question and Answer



What is Sensory Processing?

 Sensory Processing: How the nervous system receives input from the senses and turns input into an appropriate motor and behavioral responses.

Why should we make this a focus?

- Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)
- Over-responsive vs Under-responsive



Facemasks and SPD

•Face masks impact on a person with SPD:

- •Breathing = nervous system regulator
- •Tactile = sense of touch
- •Olfactory = sense of smell
- •Proprioception = where body is in space
- Emotional Regulation*
- Impulsivity*

•If possible, allow child to express what they **like** or **dislike** about wearing a facemask



Strategies to support wearing a face mask...

Parent / sibling/stuffed animal as a model for wearing
Make it "fun"

•Practice wearing at home •Increase the amount of time worn each day

•Include child in the process •Design, color, putting on

•Explore different fabrics

•Choose breathable, non-itchy fabrics

- •Ear attachments (minimize pressure around the ear)
- •Adult sizes vs Child sizes



Simple Modifications











Behavioral Strategies: Language & Visuals

Use transitional warnings

•"In 5 minutes we will go outside. Remember, we will put on our jackets and masks"

Offer choices when possible

•"Do you want to wear your orange or your blue mask today?"

•Structure your language including the **reward** of a preferred activity

•"When you put on your mask, we will get to ride on your scooter"

•Visuals to support the routine

Social stories

•Simple visual schedules by door (e.g. steps to going outside)









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Social Stories: For both wearing a mask and seeing others wear a mask https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnP-



https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/FreeDownload/Wearing-A-Mask-Story-for-Children-5463572



Behavioral Strategies

Pairing: You introduce the individual to the mask pairing it with frequent positive reinforcement

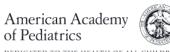
-start by simply showing the mask or giving it to the individual, followed by a reinforcer, such as tickles or hugs. The goal is for the individual to be comfortable holding or seeing the mask.

-Once individual is comfortable with the mask you will take small steps toward them wearing the mask.

Chaining: You provide positive reinforcement for small steps towards wearing the mask. Steps could vary by individual but might include putting mask near face, touching face with mask, putting elastic over head, etc.



Additional Resources



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Masks and Children During COVID-19

Critical Updates on COVID-19 / Masks and Children During COVID-19

https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19infections/masks-and-children-during-covid-19/



Questions & Answers

- Thank you for your attention and participation!
- Please write questions into chat feature and let us know of additional topics you would like covered
- For copies of slides, please email: <u>audrey.rouhandeh@mssm.edu</u> or bari.britvan@mssm.edu

