

Tips for Helping Children Adjust to Face Masks:

It might be scary for children to wear a mask, or see the adults around them wearing masks. Here's are some tips from OEC's Fostering Well-Being team:

First and foremost, child care providers should pass this information along to families so they can have conversations with children first. Child care staff can reiterate what families are saying at home.

Supportive relationships are key during emergencies and will go a long way with children.

If children ask about people wearing masks or other face coverings, parents and caregivers can explain:

- Sometimes people wear masks to stay safe and teachers are wearing masks to stay safe.
- Sometimes people wear masks to be a germ buster.
- Sometimes people wear masks when they are sick.
- When they are all better, they stop wearing the mask.

Keep answers to questions simple and developmentally appropriate. As caregivers, we talk about not sharing germs and that is why we wash our hands and use tissues to blow our noses.

- Children need to know they are safe, remind them you are here to keep them safe.
- Children may ask if they will get sick. Answer them honestly. Everyone gets sick. Ask them about the time they had the sniffles or a tummy ache. Remind them if they get sick their family will be there to take care of them.
- Allow children to role play with masks. Be creative and use art materials to design masks that are for the individual child.

- Give them control. It's also a great time to remind your children of what they can do to help - washing their hands often, coughing into a tissue or their sleeves, cleaning tables or toys, etc..
- Watch for signs of anxiety. Children may not have the words to express their worry, but you may see signs of it. They may get cranky, be more clingy, have trouble sleeping, or seem distracted. Keep the reassurance going and try to stick to your normal routines.
- If you have questions or need assistance with children experiencing anxiety, please reach out to 1.800.799.5876 to connect with an Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Specialist in your area. ECMH Specialists can help you more effectively support children who have difficulty adjusting to changes at home or in child care and education programs.