Masks and children during COVID-19

Children may feel anxious or frightened of having to wear a mask in public. Some tips to help them feel more comfortable include:

- While wearing masks, look in the mirror and talk about it

- Put a mask on a favorite stuffed animal. Ask follow-up questions about why the stuffed animal is wearing the mask. Depending on your child's response, you can clear up any confusion and offer reassurance.

- Decorate a mask so it's more personalized and fun

- Show your child pictures of other children wearing masks

- Draw a mask on their favorite book character

- Have your child practice wearing a mask at home first. Teach them how to put them on and take them off.

- For children under 3 years old, it's best to answer their questions simply in language they understand. If children ask about people wearing masks or other face coverings, parents can explain that sometimes people wear masks when they are sick, and when they are all better, they stop wearing the mask.

- An important way to reassure children is to emphasize how you are taking steps to stay safe. Children feel empowered and less afraid when they know what to do to keep themselves safe.

- For children over age 3, try focusing on germs. The masks help keep your own germs to yourself. Some germs are good, some are bad – we can't always tell which are good or bad, which is why you need to wear a mask. Some germs can make you sick. We to make sure you keep those germs away from your own body.

- One of the biggest challenges with having children wear masks relates to them "feeling different" or stereotyping them as being sick. If this becomes more of a norm, it will help children not to feel singled out or isolated, and they may feel strange not wearing something.

Sources: Kids Health; American Academy of Pediatrics