

## Face Masks in Young Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Parents' and Pediatricians' Point of view

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**Background :** In countries with high SARS-CoV-2 circulation, the pandemic has presented many challenges on different fronts, affecting lives and livelihoods. Efforts to keep schools open are among the most important. In France, to keep schools open, wearing a face mask has been mandatory for children from age 6 years since November 2020.

The **Objective** of this study was to evaluate the acceptability and tolerance of wearing a facemask by children as well as both parents and pediatricians.

### Methods:

- This is an Online survey using questionnaire method conducted in December 2020.
- Two different anonymous questionnaires with closed questions were available for participants.
- The participants were 1. parents of primary school children and 2. Registered pediatricians.
- The data were collected by using SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey Inc.).

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Pediatric Evidence And Research Learning Snippet



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### Results:1) Parents survey – Total 2,954 questionnaires were analysed .

- 54.6% of parents understood the reason for wearing a mask, most of whom (84.6%) explained the reasons to their children.
- Face mask was applied to children because it was mandatory (93.4%) even if they disagreed (63.3%).
- When interviewed by parents, children said they were usually embarrassed (80.9%) by the mask.
- The main symptoms or changes of behavior attributed to the mask according to parents were headache (49.0%), speaking difficulties (45%), change in mood (45.2%) and breathing discomfort (28.1%).

### 2) Pediatrician survey – Total 663 questionnaires were analyzed

- 67.7% of pediatricians agreed with mandatory mask-wearing for children > 6 years of age .
- 15% of pediatricians systematically asked about the mask tolerance during the consultation.
- 64.3% of parents complained about the mask during consultation.
- Main drawbacks of face mask reported by pediatricians were fog on glasses (68.2%), breathing discomfort (53.1%), cutaneous disorders (42.4%) and headaches (38.2%)

**Conclusion:** Despite the many inconveniences reported, children agree to wear the mask better than their parents think. Pediatricians should sufficiently take the opportunity during the consultation to further explain the reasons for wearing the mask because their pedagogical role is crucial.

### EXPERT COMMENT

Face masks are a simple and powerful tool to protect against covid-19, particularly for children who have not yet received the vaccine.

As per June 18th 2021, DGHS India guidelines,

1. Masks are not recommended for children aged 5 years and under.
2. Children aged 6-11 years may wear a mask, depending on ability of child to use a mask safely and under direct supervision of parents or guardian.
3. Children >12years should wear a mask under same condition as adults.

Most Children readily agree to wear masks. Hence, we as pediatricians should use every opportunity available to educate the parents and children regarding safe usage of masks.

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With warm regards,

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### Reference

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