

**COVID-19 and the Use of Masks by Children.**

Statement From ASPHER and the European Academy of Pediatrics (EAP)

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**Background and Aim:** The use of masks and respirators in adults has reached a consensus in almost all countries, which is not being verified for children. **This working group – ASPHER (Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region) & EAP : aims at providing guidance on use of masks by children,** based on surveys, international interviews of doctors and nurses in pediatric hospital settings, UNESCO and school health organizations.

**ACADEMIC P.E.A.R.L.S**

Pediatric Evidence And Research Learning Snippet

**Use of mask by children in covid times****Excerpts from the Recommendations:**

- Masks provide the **similar type of protection** from COVID-19 to a child as to an adult.
- Availability of appropriate sized manufactured masks for children is rare; home-made masks or cloth industry produced masks can address adequate sizes and adjust to supply demands.
- Only masks with elastic band and correct ergonomic design** (not allowing air to pass through the sides) should be used. Design stamping is also important: **children react better to social masks with design (cartoons) rather than surgical masks.**
- A child hat-shield (face shield with 360 degree covered) has some utility for the age group of 2- 6 years; but is not an exact substitute. It might protect the child from droplets, but does not protect other individuals. **Droplets may remain on the plastic which is prone to handling by kids.**
- For children, masks represent a relevant psychological dimension too.
- A policy of mandatory mask use by children must be accompanied by training in use and disposal.** Children tend to have more physical contact between peers, more contacts with surfaces, touching the face etc. Incorrect use can jeopardize the advantages of mask portability.
- Only masks should be considered for children, especially if having pre-existent allergies or dermatitis. **Respirators [FFP2/FFP3 (N95)] should not be used.**
- Use of masks in different age groups:
  - 0-2 years: no major advantage.
  - 3-4 years: accept masks, but fear factor +.
  - 5-6 years: identical to 3-4 years, but fear and crying is lesser.
  - > 6 years: acceptance is similar to adult.
- The use of masks by children are directly linked to their parents' education.
- In children with disabilities, effective protection provided by correct mask use must be considered against loss of cognitive, emotional, relational and other dimensions of the child's life and family. eg: **in deaf children who need to use sign language, children with persistent drooling ( can alter mask permeability).**

**EXPERT COMMENT**

**“ Correct fitting home- made/cloth masks with elastic bands are appropriate for use in most children (>2 years) in COVID-19 times. Parents must be educated about the correct method of use and disposal of masks, so as to enhance safety of mask use in children.”**

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With warm regards,

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