

Why Masks?

This lesson is geared toward elementary aged children, although some of the discussions can be adapted for older kids

Objectives:

- Teach children the purpose of wearing masks
- Help children feel comfortable with masks
- Dispel any fear that may be associated with masks
- Help children understand how masks work

What you will need:

- One mask for each family member
- Spray bottle filled with water (set on spray and not stream)
- Printable picture cards from Unexpectedlyperfect.com
- Small prize or treat (optional)

Introduction:

Explain that you will be practicing wearing masks during the lesson and ask each family member to put their mask on.

Optional: Tell the children that whoever keeps their mask on for the entire lesson will earn a small prize or treat.

Note: If any child has fear or anxiety associated with masks, do not force it. Have them hold their mask instead.

Discussion:

1. Why do we wear masks?
 - a. Listen to the children's answers and help expand on their answers.

Note: Do not just say "because of the sickness". Teach the children that the sickness is called COVID-19. Giving the illness a name will help children understand the "unknown" and help them realize that all sickness isn't bad.

- b. Explain that there are many different kinds of sicknesses we can catch that are different from COVID-19.
 - i. Ask the children if they remember a time they were sick in the past. Discuss how they felt (sore throat, stuffy nose, stomach ache, throwing up, etc.)
- c. Explain that getting sick is not fun, but our bodies actually can become stronger by making it easier to fight off another sickness in the future. (for older children you can talk about our immune system).
- d. What makes COVID-19 different than other sicknesses?
 - i. COVID-19 is making some people more sick than usual.
 - ii. For younger children, telling them that it's making people sicker may be all they need to hear. Below discusses going into more detail if needed.

Object Lesson #1:

Show the different printed sports cards one at a time. With each image, ask the children what the people are wearing to protect their bodies in each particular sport.

Answers:

Soccer= Shin guards

Football= Helmet, shoulder pads, thigh pads, neck collar, mouth guard

Biking: Helmet

Roller blading: Knee pads, elbow pads, wrist guards, helmet

Talking points:

- Just like in these pictures of people wearing special equipment to protect their bodies, we are wearing masks when we go places to protect our bodies from COVID-19.
- The amazing thing about wearing a mask is that it doesn't just protect our own bodies, but we are protecting other people around us from getting COVID-19 as well. We can help stop the spread of COVID-19!
- COVID-19 is spread by when someone who has it coughs or sneezes. Tiny droplets come out of their mouths and noses. These droplets have germs that can get others sick. (Pretend to cough, as you do so, spray the bottle simultaneously by your mouth facing outward like all the droplets came out of you. Explain that when people cough the droplets and germs are even smaller so we can't see them).
- When the person who is sick wears a mask, those droplets get trapped inside their mask.
- What if the sick person doesn't wear a mask?
Answer: That's why we all wear masks! If you are wearing a mask, then the droplets get trapped on the outside of your mask so you don't breathe in the germs.
- If everyone is wearing a mask then it is like double protection.
- If you have members in your family that are at an increased risk for complications from COVID-19, add this to the discussion.

Note: Many children may express fear while discussing this. Let them talk about these fears. Reassure the children that if they wash their hands and wear their masks that they are protecting themselves and their family. Discuss how as a family you will do the best you can, but if your family ends up getting COVID-19, that ***you are a team and will get through it together.***

You know your children and how much detail you can add to this discussion. Some children will be comfortable talking about how COVID-19 is hospitalizing some individuals and that some people have even passed away and returned to heaven because of it. For other children, that will be too much detail. Listen to your children's concerns and let them guide the discussion.

Studies have shown that most children have mild to no symptoms; it's okay to reassure your children with this information if needed.

Object Lesson #2:

Stand a few feet away from a child and spray their arm or any other bare spot on their body. Talk about how they got wet (and expect lots of giggles!)

Question: What If I sprayed you over your shirt, will you get wet?

- i. Spray the child's shirt (note: the shirt will get wet, but have them lift their shirt to discover that their body stayed dry). Discuss with the children that this is how masks work.
- ii. For children who are afraid of the mask, ask them to put it over a place on their body so you can spray it to see if it keeps them dry.
- iii. Have fun with this! Let each child have a turn getting sprayed.

Talking points:

- Mask care: Now that the children have the visual of how masks work, it will make sense that there is a clean side that their face touches and a dirty side that faces outward. You can talk about folding their mask with the clean side inward when they are eating lunch at school and keeping the mask off the floor.
- COVID-19 can also be spread by touching areas that have the germs.

Question: What if someone with COVID-19 wiped their nose with their hand and then touched the table (Kids do well with visuals so pull down your mask and pretend to do this). You can also pretend to cough and spray a piece of furniture with the spray bottle).

Explain that we touch things all day (especially at school) and we don't need to be afraid of touching things and getting sick, we just need to remember to sanitize and/or wash our hands.

- For older children:
Wearing a mask is part of being a good citizen. If you have no high-risk individuals in your family, you can explain that if your family got sick you would most likely be okay, but there is a possibility that you could spread it to someone who might get really sick from it. You can use the domino effect as an example. Explain that if they wear a mask, they are like the one domino out of the row that can stop the spread of the disease.

Note: Remember to let the kids ask questions and involve them in the discussion. The point of this lesson is to have fun and make COVID-19 less scary by understanding how the disease is spread and why we wear masks and keep our hands clean. As the adult, keep your mood light hearted. If the child senses any strain or anxiety that you are having over the situation, then they are likely to feed off your stress as well.

*If you promised a small prize or treat for keeping masks on, remember to pass these out.

Remember: There is power in information, even for children