



Elkhart County Health Department

August 3, 2020

We have seen increasing evidence that wearing masks protects others from contracting COVID-19. The CDC recently released a study noting two hairdressers who tested positive for the coronavirus did not infect any of their 139 clients. Both of the hairdressers and all of the clients were wearing masks during their entire encounter. More evidence is accumulating every week. But people raise concerns about children wearing masks, both in schools and out in public when 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained. Many parents wonder how to keep the mask on the child, especially a young child, and many wonder if wearing a mask all day at school will harm their child.

Fortunately, we know there is no harm to a child from a well-fitting mask. A parent, caregiver, or teacher should make sure the mask fits—too large a mask will not fit snugly over the face, and the excess material will be sucked in when inhaling. Children can safely wear masks for long periods—children undergoing chemotherapy wear masks all day, even at home. Nevertheless, schools are aware there are times a mask is not needed and will allow students to go without masks at those times. And there are certain occasions when clear face shields will be used. For example, during speech therapy, the student needs to see how the mouth and tongue work and mimic those motions back. Both the therapist and the student would be protected if BOTH wore face shields during those sessions. There are other occasions when face shields could be used, but shields are not thought to offer the same protection level as a cloth covering, so facemasks are preferred for most occasions.

Younger children will be more accepting of facial coverings if presented matter-of-factly, as part of being dressed before going out. They may also prefer to have their own "special" mask that no one else can use. Or a "Sunday" mask for special occasions, and another one for every-day use.

Protect your child, your family, and the community by wearing a mask!

Lydia Mertz, MD
Elkhart County Health Officer

Improving the Lives, Health and Environment of our Community



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Prevent. Promote. Protect.