

May 7, 2020

Hello EHS families,

I hope that you all are doing well and continuing health and safety practices during this time. During this time, there are a lot of questions and uncertainty. Questions from our toddlers are no exception. Sometimes our toddlers ask us questions that are hard to answer, especially when we're not sure what the right answer is, like the situation many communities are facing with COVID-19.

For children under three years, it's best to answer their questions simply in language they understand. Questions that children may be asking at this time are: Why are people wearing masks? Or, why are people covering their faces? If children ask about people wearing masks or other face coverings, parents can explain. At this age, it's important to answer only the questions they ask. Avoid sharing additional information about germs, what is contagious, etc. things that they can't understand because of their age. Below are some follow up questions and ways to answer them:



Questions about masks and ways to answer:

- Is the mask a costume? No, sometimes people wear masks when they are sick or to help keep them safe so they won't get sick.
- Can the person still talk? Yes. The mask covers their mouth, but they can still talk. For example, if I put my hand over my mouth, I can still talk. You can also demonstrate at this time.
- Are they scary or a "bad" person? No. The mask covers up part of their face, but that doesn't mean that they are scary or bad. They are wearing a mask because they are sick or to keep other people from getting sick.
- Will I get sick? Everybody gets sick sometimes. If you get sick, Mommy/Daddy will take care of you until you are all better. The doctors will also help you get better.



In the community, people are wearing masks more and more and various stores require wearing a mask before entering. If your child sees someone wearing a mask, your child may want to "pretend play" wearing a mask. This is very typical for toddlers. Pretend play is one way that children make sense of their world, by "trying on" the roles and people they see in the world around them. As a parent, you can decide how comfortable you are with this play theme. You might also suggest pretend play around medical roles (doctor/nurse with a teddy bear) to focus on how people take care of others when they are sick.

- **Please note that the Centers for Disease Control states that cloth face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, anyone who has trouble breathing or those unable to remove the mask without assistance.**

During stressful times, what children need most is you, a safe, secure relationship where they can express their feelings and questions. Here are some helpful tips:

- Keep daily routines (naptime, bedtime) as consistent as possible for your child.
- Limit your child's exposure to media reports about COVID-19. Remember, your child is soaking in the tension you're feeling as you watch the news.
- Discuss your own questions/worries about COVID-19 when your child is out of earshot.
- Practice good hygiene to limit exposure to COVID-19