Helping kids get comfortable with masks

Oregon pediatricians at the Oregon Pediatric Society offer advice for parents on helping kids with mask wearing. To keep Oregonians healthy and safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, wearing masks while in public spaces is required for children over 5 years of age and recommended for children over the age of 2*. Here are five tips that may help accustom toddlers and children to masking up:

- **Start early:** If you can, introduce masks well ahead of when you think your child will be required to wear them. Consider starting by having masks around the home and pointing out their presence. Encourage children to touch, explore and play with the masks.
- **Make it familiar:** Parents and older siblings can wear masks around the house or put them on stuffed animals and dolls to make them more familiar.
- **Make it fun:** Provide masks with fun patterns or pictures and let your child choose the mask they wear before going out.
- **Be honest:** Even for young children you can say something like “OK, time to put our mask on to make sure we all stay safe.”
- **Be consistent:** Once a child is comfortable wearing a mask, it is important to be consistent with where and when masks are worn. Consistency is the key to habit forming behaviors. One easy place to start is everywhere outside the home (“Whenever we go somewhere that is not our home, we wear a mask”).

*For safety reasons, children under age 2 should not wear masks.

The complete article: *Kids & Masks: The Why & How* on the Oregon Pediatric Society webpage

*Source:* Oregon Health Authority

Coronavirus Update: February 2021

Healthoregon.org/coronavirus

Check out the video *Mask Up Oregon Kids* on YouTube