

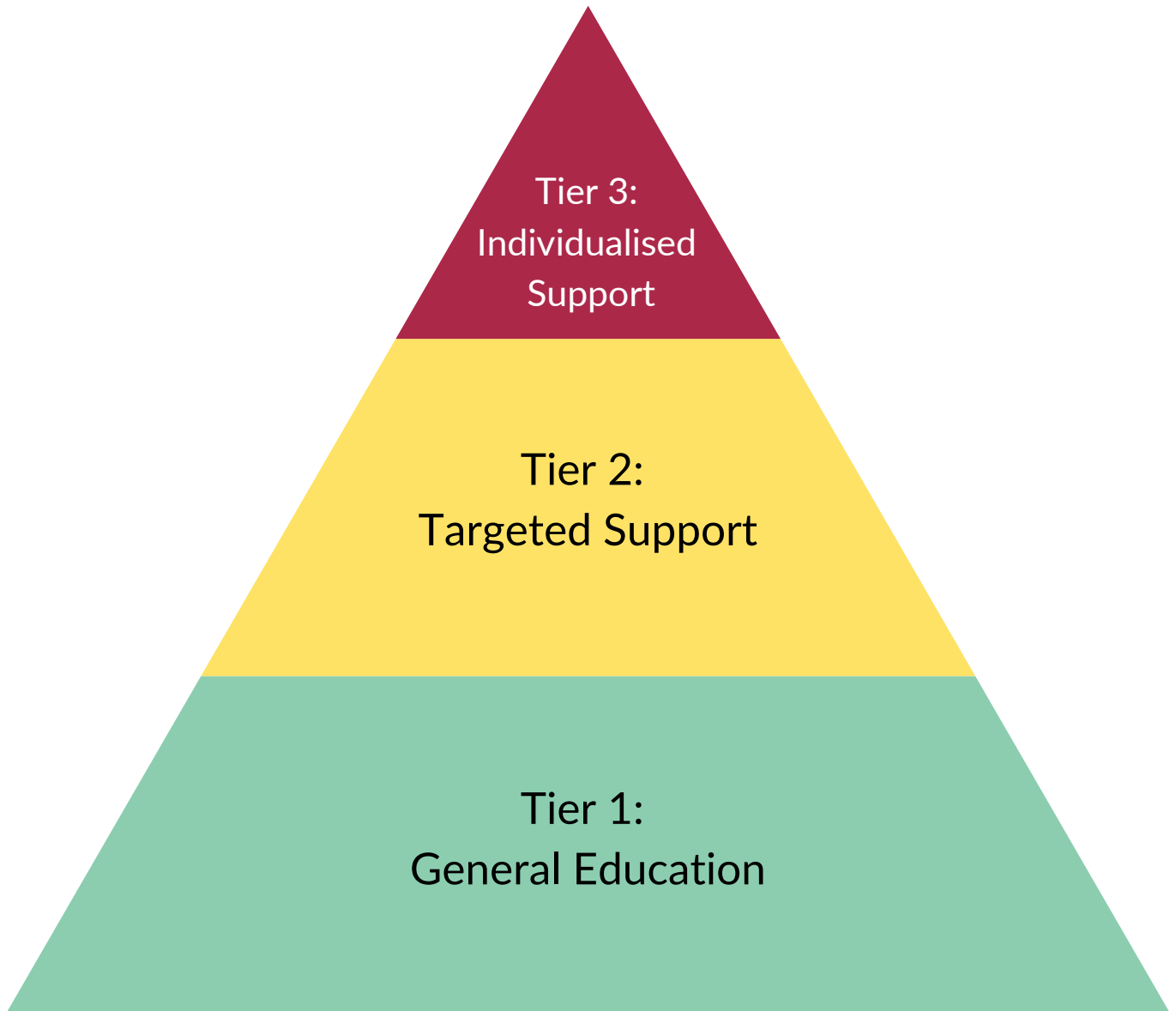
A guide to  
**HELPING YOUR CHILD  
WEAR A MASK**

Brought to you by

Child Development Unit

**Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children's Medical Institute**

# 3 TIERS OF SUPPORT



**Tier 1:** Start here. Try these general strategies first.

**Tier 2:** If you tried strategies in Tier 1 and still encounter difficulties getting your child to wear a mask, try these strategies in Tier 2.

**Tier 3:** Strategies in Tier 3 should be used only if your child resists wearing a mask despite using strategies from Tier 1 and 2.

# 1

## General Education

Try these strategies first.

### Help your child understand

Tell your child clearly that there is a pandemic happening.  
Say: "There is a virus spreading around that will make people sick."

Explain why everyone has to wear masks when going outdoors.  
Say: "The mask protects everyone from getting the virus, so that we can remain healthy and play."

Consider the use of visual aids via these Social Stories:



#### Fight COVID-19 with Superhero Me

#### Information about COVID-19

#### Wearing a Mask

### Praise generously

Praise generously and specifically whenever your child tolerates wearing a mask to encourage the behaviour.  
You may say:

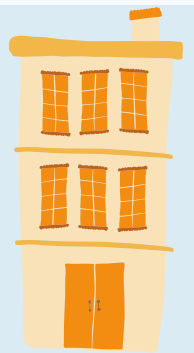
- "I like how you put your mask on!" and/or
- "I like how you are wearing your mask!"

Remember to praise your child for wearing a mask, even after reaching home!



### Stay at home

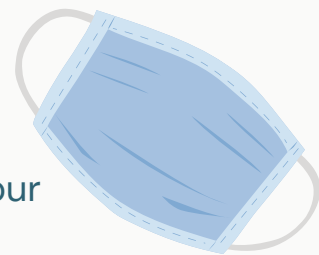
If possible, minimise going outdoors to reduce the need for wearing a mask.



### Show the way

Wear a mask to show your child that it is safe.

Encourage your child to wear one too.



# 1

## General Education

Try these strategies first.

### Use an alternative (if possible)

If the current mask is too uncomfortable, consider getting a more comfortable alternative.



### Provide choices

Consider letting your child choose a mask that he/she prefers such as:

- Animal
- Colour
- Print



Providing your child with choices gives him/her more control over the situation and may encourage him/her to wear the mask.

### Use a distraction

Bring something your child likes, such as a favourite toy, to use as a distraction while putting on the mask for him/her.



### Give gentle reminders

Your child may occasionally pull his/her mask off or not realise that it has become loose.



If so, gently remind him/her to put it back on.

Alternatively, you can readjust the mask for your child.

### Pause and check

If your child appears frustrated or upset after putting on the mask, pause and check in with him/her.

- "Is the mask too tight?"
- "Is it causing any pain?"



Reassure your child in a calm tone of voice.

When your child has calmed down, encourage him/her to wear the mask again.

Remember to give generous praises.

# 2

## Targeted Support

If the previous strategies did not work, try these strategies instead.

### Be consistent and patient

Your child may still resist wearing a mask, despite your best efforts in trying strategies in Tier 1.

A more gradual approach may be needed. This will require consistency and patience!



### Get familiar

Let your child explore a mask by looking, touching and smelling it.

- Show him/her different types of masks (e.g. cloth masks).



### Practice at home

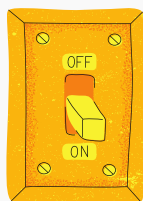
Model wearing a mask at home.

Encourage your child to wear a mask too, while engaging in fun and preferred activities for *scheduled* short periods.



### Masks on and off

Switch between keeping a mask on and taking it off, while doing fun activities.



Avoid constantly frustrating your child, causing the fun activities to become bad experiences.

### Start small

- Start with short durations (even a few seconds). The length of time may vary depending on your child's level of tolerance.

- Gradually increase the duration.

- Praise and give small rewards when your child succeeds. Say "Good job for wearing the mask! Here is your favourite biscuit."



### Keep it fun

Practise wearing masks in

- Pretend play or
- Activities he/she enjoys (e.g. singing, watching favourite shows)



# 2

## Targeted Support

If the previous strategies did not work, try these strategies instead.

### Pause play (only while practising wearing mask)

- Set consequences for not wearing a mask and let your child know.
- Pause the activity when your child refuses to wear a mask.
- Tell your child that play will only continue when he/she puts a mask on.
- Follow through on set consequences, e.g. changing to a less preferred activity.
- Praise your child when it is due!



### Use similar alternatives (Only if your child refuses to put on a mask at all)

Have him/her wear familiar mask-like objects, like a party mask, safely over his/her mouth and nose during play.



### Celebrate small wins

Be realistic, start small.

Do not hold back on your praise and rewards.



### Make masks a must

Calmly tell your child he/she *must* wear a mask.

Clearly state the consequences such as:

- He/she will not be allowed to leave the house
- Officers will not allow him/her entry to places
- A fine might be given





Wait for your child to comply or enforce consequence.

### Use pictures

Pictures may help your child understand the required order of events.

Draw, write and/or print one at home. For example,

| First   | Then  |
|---|---|
| <br>Wear Mask | <br>Shopping |

# 3

## Individualised Support

If you still encounter difficulties in helping your child wear a mask persists, consider using these strategies.

### Get help

Some children may need individualised help from a professional.

Consider consulting a paediatrician, psychologist or therapist.



### Be a partner

Professional help is more likely to be successful and effective when caregivers are collaborative partners.

You know your child best, so you are an important partner!



## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS



If your child needs to leave home for essential services:

- Let your child wear a mask that is difficult to remove.
- Keep the visit brief.
- Bring your child's favourite toy to use as distraction.
- Expect some crying and fussing.

Caregivers – if you feel frustrated, stay calm and do deep breathing.

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