AUTISM SCIENCE FOUNDATION

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COVID-19 Webinar Series

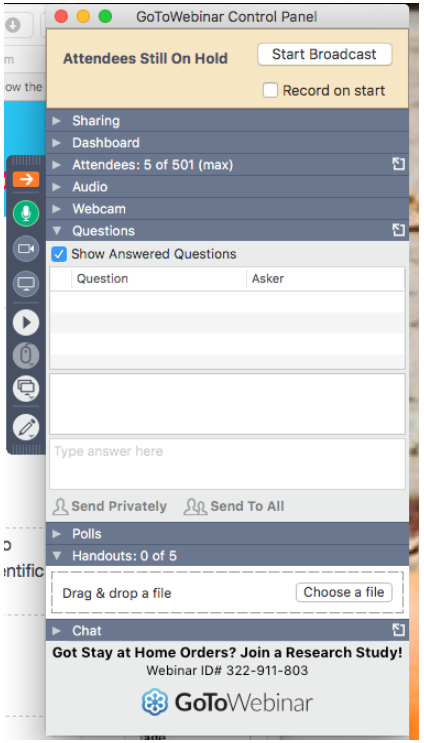
REDUCING CHALLENGES IN WEARING PPE

JUNE 30, 2020, 4PM EST

AUTISM SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Guidelines for today:

- You are all on mute, no video. Go wild!
- Use the question box for questions or comments
- You send questions to me, I will ask them anonymously, or put your name in if you say it is OK
- ahalladay@autismsciencefoundation.org
- Presentation recording and slides will be posted on the ASF Covid-19 resource page



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Strategies to Reduce Challenges with Personal Protective Equipment and Social Distancing

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Disclosures

The presenters have no disclosures to report.

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Overview

- Learning new skills: breaking into steps, reinforcement, practice
- Understanding social distancing and guidelines for wearing PPE
- Behavioral strategies
- Sensory and breathing strategies
- Downloadable resources

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Social Distancing

- COVID-19 is a virus that can make us sick
- Keeping at least 6 feet apart is one way to prevent spread of virus
- What does 6 feet look like?
  - Visual cues: Tape, 2 hula hoops; length of blanket or bath towels; measure off in yard or room to practice
- Games like red light/green light freeze tag

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Glove Options

- **Disposables**
  - lightweight
  - sweaty
  - hard to put on/remove
  - cost
- **Winter gloves**
  - already own
  - easier to put on/remove
  - washable
  - thickness/hot

- **Tissues/wipes when touching object and/or hand sanitizer after touching**
  - more comfortable
  - hard to remember
  - availability
  - smell of/sensitivity to sanitizer

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Using Gloves…

from Self-advocates

"If you don't like wearing them, try to just wear them for a quick run to pick up food or coffee and slowly build the amount of time you can wear one. We started by going inside a coffee shop and then straight back into the car.

Layla

"If you're going to a place where there is automatic doors, then it's optional. If you're going somewhere where you have to manually open doors, then wear them because you don't know who was there before you.

Definitely use them if you're using things like the self-checkout machine at the grocery store or if you're using the self-use machine at the post office.

Although, glove wearing is optional compared to face coverings where it's mandatory."

Sam

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WHY

Coronavirus can be spread when we breathe, cough or sneeze. Wearing a mask reduces spread from person to person.

WHO

People who wear face masks help prevent the virus from spreading. Children under the age of two and those with breathing challenges should not wear face masks.

WHERE

Use face masks when in public settings, especially in places where you are in close contact with others such as a grocery store, laundromat, pharmacy, or bank.

HOW

When wearing a face mask, make sure it covers both the nose and mouth. After using the face mask, remove it and be sure to wash hands. Disposable masks should be thrown in the trash and fabric masks should be washed in the washing machine.

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Face covering options

face mask

neck gaiter

face shield

Depends upon person's preference, comfort level and face size/shape

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May take weeks or months for person with ASD to become comfortable with wearing PPE

Begin as soon as possible and practice often to help make wearing PPE as positive as possible

Look for fabrics, textures, and colors/patterns person will tolerate and prefer

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Learning to Wear a Face Mask

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Use a "**visual timer**" technique. Put a timer on and wear a mask alongside the person. Incrementally increase the time to get used to the feeling.

Give a **reward** for practicing wearing the mask at home. For example, allow screen time while wearing the mask.

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Graduated Steps for Face Mask Use

1. See the face mask in different places in your house.
2. See family members wear their face masks at home. You can also put the mask on a favorite doll or stuffed animal.
3. Touch the face mask with hands.
4. Hold the face mask in hands.
5. Hold the face mask closer to the face, and even smell it.
6. Have the mask touch the face.
7. Let the mask cover the nose and mouth.
8. Stretch the face mask around the ears.
9. Wear the mask on the face.
10. Practice in different environments.

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Each step may take a different length of time for the person to become comfortable

Provide praise, tickles, tokens, tapping elbows, cheering, or other rewards after each success

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- At first, the person may be touching the face mask often, playing with it, or taking it on-and-off.
- It may be helpful to have the person wear the mask during favorite activities such as when watching a favorite video, playing a favorite game, or getting a piece of a favorite snack.
- This will show that the mask isn't only for situations that are unfamiliar or scary.

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The person with ASD will be seeing other people wearing masks. It may be hard to recognize who the other person is or determine facial expressions and feelings.

The person with ASD might associate face masks with something scary such as a traumatic experience, a character in a movie, or a Halloween costume.

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Mask Anxiety

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If the person expresses fear over the mask, address what is bothering them. This may be due to fear of the mask itself, itchiness, feeling hot or difficulty breathing.

- Help the person feel more comfortable observing others wearing face masks, including YouTube® videos
- Include the person in making the mask or even decorating it with stickers or using fun fabrics
- When creating or choosing a mask, experiment with different fabric textures

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Variations in Rules and Routines

- Rules and expectations for wearing PPE differ across settings
- Look online for images to help know what to expect
- Airport, dentist, school, supermarket may all have different rules
- Create a book of stories to help person predict what to expect

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Incorporating Rules for Face Mask Use

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1. Caregiver wears face mask and announces a fun activity, such as swinging in the yard
2. Create a rule. (e.g. "When we swing, you should try to look like me.")
3. Offer the mask. Without pleading or asking, re-state the rule.
4. Give recognition/praise for "looking like me" and "following the rule."
5. Be positive so the mask doesn't become associated with punishment.
   - Try, "When your mask is on, we can go."
   - Try not to use, "If you don't wear a mask, you can't play."
6. The hard part: This is a rule for everyone when learning to wear a mask and when wearing a mask in public places. Caregivers need to keep their masks on in order to be the model.

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Preparing for Change Now and in the Future

- When transitioning from virtual to live therapy and education sessions, ask clinicians to show student what they look like in a mask
- For the initial live sessions, professionals can wear a mask and tape or pin a picture of themselves without the mask to their shirt
- This may be a fun project for the student to create for themselves, as well

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Gather Information to Understand Preferences and Needs

"I have a sensitivity to light due to my migraines and I need glasses when I'm outside and both a mask and glasses are the most uncomfortable.

Here's what I do. When I'm outside I just have my glasses on. As soon as I enter a building, the glasses come off and the mask goes on."

Sam

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Using Masks…

from Sam, Self-advocate

I wear a mask in enclosed spaces including stores, doctor's offices, and restaurants that don't have a drive-thru. I don't wear a mask walking at the park, walking around with my dog, going through the drive-thru, or in a parking lot. However, as soon as I enter the building, the mask goes right on. Recently, I had a doctor's appointment. I had the mask on when I arrived and did the COVID screening, walking through the halls, when I registered, when the medical assistant did my intake, and when the doctor was in the exam room. However, while I was waiting for the doctor to come in, I took it off. As soon as the doctor entered the room, the mask went right back on. As soon as I left the building, the mask came right off.

Focus on the positives! It's for everyone's good. You don't infect yourself or someone else. It's only temporary. Find one that is as comfortable as possible. There are multiple types of masks out there.

It took me about three times to get used to wearing it. Be as quick as possible. The sooner you're done, the sooner you can get it off. If needed, take a couple second breather from the mask.

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Using Masks…

from Layla, Self-advocate

Try different masks because they don't feel the same. Some are more comfortable than others and make it easier to breathe.

Try to find one with adjustable straps.

You don't have to wear them in the car or when you are outside (unless you are close to other people) Don't forget to sanitize before you get back in the car. We try to take our masks/ gloves off outside the car, open the door, and sanitize before getting into the car. We keep sanitizer in the car door pocket for easy access. Our mantra is – "Mask off, door open, sanitize, and get right in!"

It's also important to find a mask that fits your style because it makes you feel better about wearing it… like tie-dye. Remember, you are not alone. Everyone wears them now and some are even having fun with the style.

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Hand Washing

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Visual Supports with Sequential Steps

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Sensory overload…

masks, washing hands, new rules, new routines

too many… | too new… | too fast… | too much…

- **Too many things at once** for brain and body to handle
- **New things** are hard for brain and body to process
- **Too fast.** Brain can't get the information it needs (can't figure out what to do fast enough) Body cant figure out what to do fast enough.

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Sensory overload. Don’t spill the bucket.

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Steady the bucket

- Less talking
- Talk in low slow voice
- Use calm facial expressions
- Use distractions
- Use slower body gestures

- Remove unneeded parts of tasks
- Give more time to figure things out
- Provide help

Are we breathing?

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"It is hard to breathe with a mask on."

- I feel like I can't breathe
- I panic
- Fight or flight is triggered
- I am in overload
- My bucket is pouring out
- I need help

Before…

- Starfish breathing
- Singing
- Make long sounds, "ahhhhhh"
- Breathe with me
- Blow tissues or cotton balls
- Practice blowing air out bottom of mask

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During…

- Take breaks to breathe
- Have child copy you
- Use slow motion talking, counting, and combine with character pretend play
- Make long sounds, "ahhhhhh"

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More Strategies

- Tune in to what the body needs – quiet, deep pressure, taking a breath, hint to get started, or slowing down task.
- Connect the brain (what will happen), body (what do I need to do) and pacing (just right…uh oh, too much). Use picture stories and visual cues of what to do next.
- Create an “On-the-Go Sensory Space.”
- Bring a small, pocket-sized favorite toy as distraction to help prevent overload.

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Supportive Tools and Resources

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Visual Aids with Simple, Literal Text

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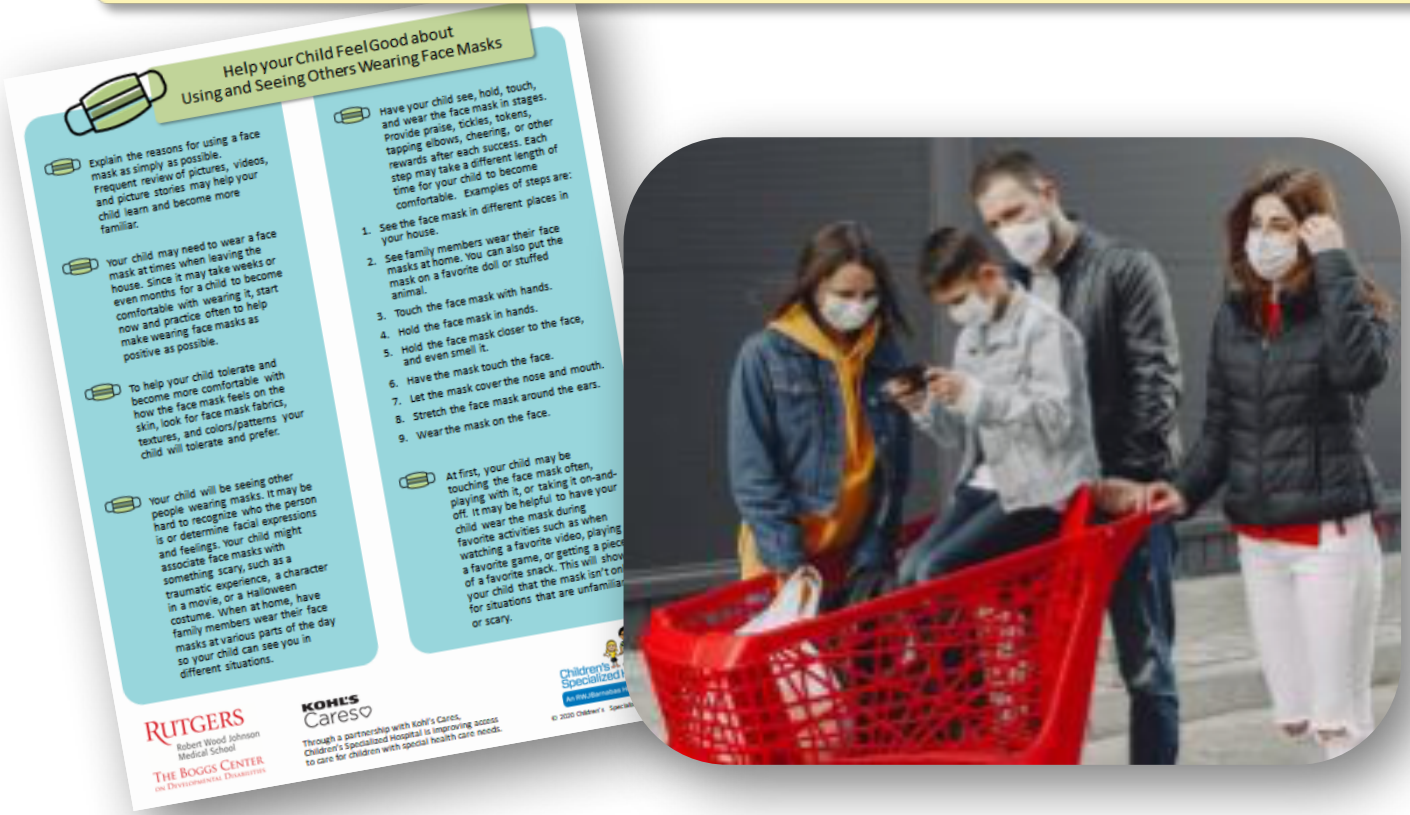
Help your Child Feel Good about Using and Seeing Others Wearing Face Masks



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A Parent's Guide

Helping your child wear a face mask

Your child may have challenges or discomfort when wearing a face mask. After talking about the importance of face masks, ask your child about what might be bothersome and any preferences in type, color, or style. Once you understand, you can help work with your child to help make the face mask more comfortable to wear.

ABOUT FACE MASKS

WHY
Coronavirus can be spread when we breathe, cough or sneeze. Wearing a mask reduces spread from person to person.

WHO
People who wear face masks help prevent the virus from spreading. Children under the age of two and those with breathing challenges should not wear face masks.

HOW
When wearing a face mask, make sure it covers both the nose and mouth. After using the face mask, remove it and be sure to wash hands. Disposable masks should be thrown in the trash and fabric masks should be washed in the washing machine.

WHERE
Use face masks when in public settings, especially in places where you are in close contact with others such as a grocery store, laundromat, pharmacy, or bank.

TYPES OF MASKS
Depending on your child's comfort level and face shape

Face mask

Neck Gaiter

GETTING COMFORTABLE

Mask Anxiety
If your child expresses fear over the mask, address what is bothering them. This may be due to fear of the mask itself, itchiness, feeling hot or difficulty breathing.

- Include your child in making the mask or even decorating it with stickers or using fun fabrics
- Have a child feel more comfortable with face masks by seeing other family members wear them as well
- When creating or choosing a mask, experiment with different fabric textures

Ways to get used to a face mask
Use a "visual timer" technique. Put a timer on and wear a mask alongside your child at home. Incrementally increase the time to allow your child to get used to the feel.

Rewards. Give your child a reward for practicing wearing the mask at home. For example, allow your child screen time while wearing the mask.

How to make a mask:
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/DIY-cloth-face-covering-instructions.pdf

Be patient! It may take days or even weeks for a child to get used to a face mask. There are people around you who could help. Ask your health care provider to get the support you need.

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Personal Pictorial Narratives

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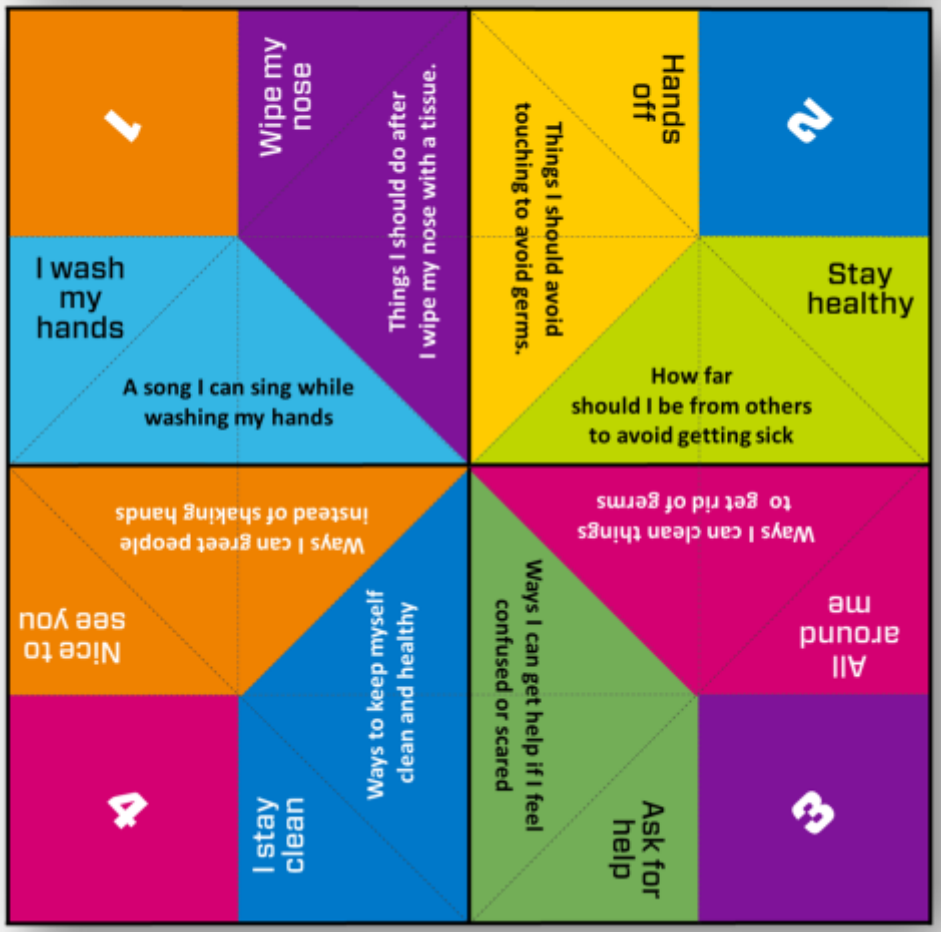
Ways to Stay Healthy Chatterbox



Engaging Interactive Learning Tools

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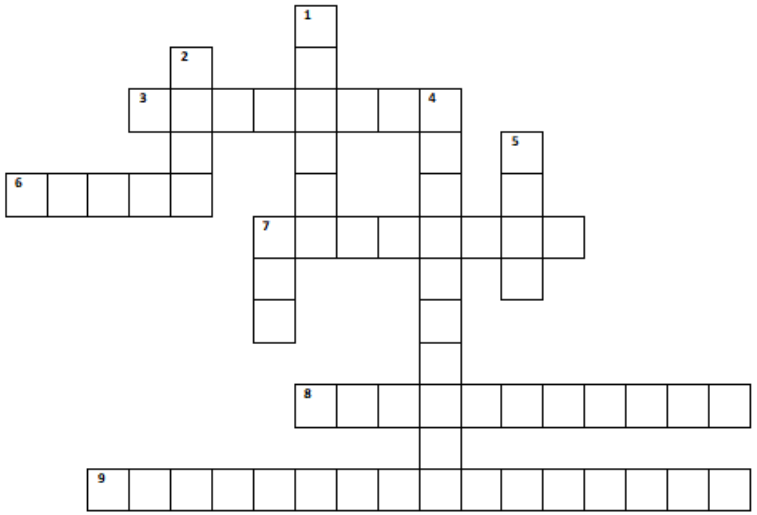
Learn about COVID-19

Let's be healthy together.



ACROSS

3 The worldwide spread of a disease

6 Flattening the _____ means slowing down the spread of the virus over time

7 Coughing, fever, tiredness, and difficulty breathing are some of the _____ of COVID-19

8 COVID-19 is a new type of_____disease

9 Avoiding close contact with other people to avoid spreading the illness to another person

DOWN

1 It's important to wash our hands thoroughly for a minimum of_____seconds

2 One way to prevent getting coronavirus is to avoid touching our _____ with our hands

4 A person who can spread COVID-19 to another person is _____

5 There's no place like _____

7 We should maintain a minimum distance of_____ feet from another person

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Additional Resources

- State agencies and organizations can assist individuals and families in accessing PPE. Delivery services such as Amazon offer assistance (e.g. in NJ, SNAP benefits can be used for delivery services and COMCAST was offering free internet to lower-income families for a period of time)
- Search internet for instructions on making no-sew face masks from old shirts or socks. If no access to computer, a local library can assist. Some organizations will send free face masks.
- Some Facebook parent groups discuss tips related to masks and other PPE
- Varied government agencies, organizations, and health providers offer practical resources. For example…
  - Part of Rutgers University Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities has developed COVID-19 resources, specifically for adults (https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/links/COVID-19Resources.html#Mask)
  - Autism Speaks has been collaborating with organizations nationwide to compile reliable COVID-19 tools and resources

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KOHL'S Cares

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Children's Specialized Hospital is the nation's leading provider of inpatient and outpatient care for children from birth to 21 years of age facing special health challenges – from chronic illnesses and complex physical disabilities like brain and spinal cord injuries, to developmental and behavioral issues like autism and mental health.

At 13 different New Jersey locations, our pediatric specialists partner with families to make our many innovative therapies and medical treatments more personalized and effective so each child can reach their full potential.

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