



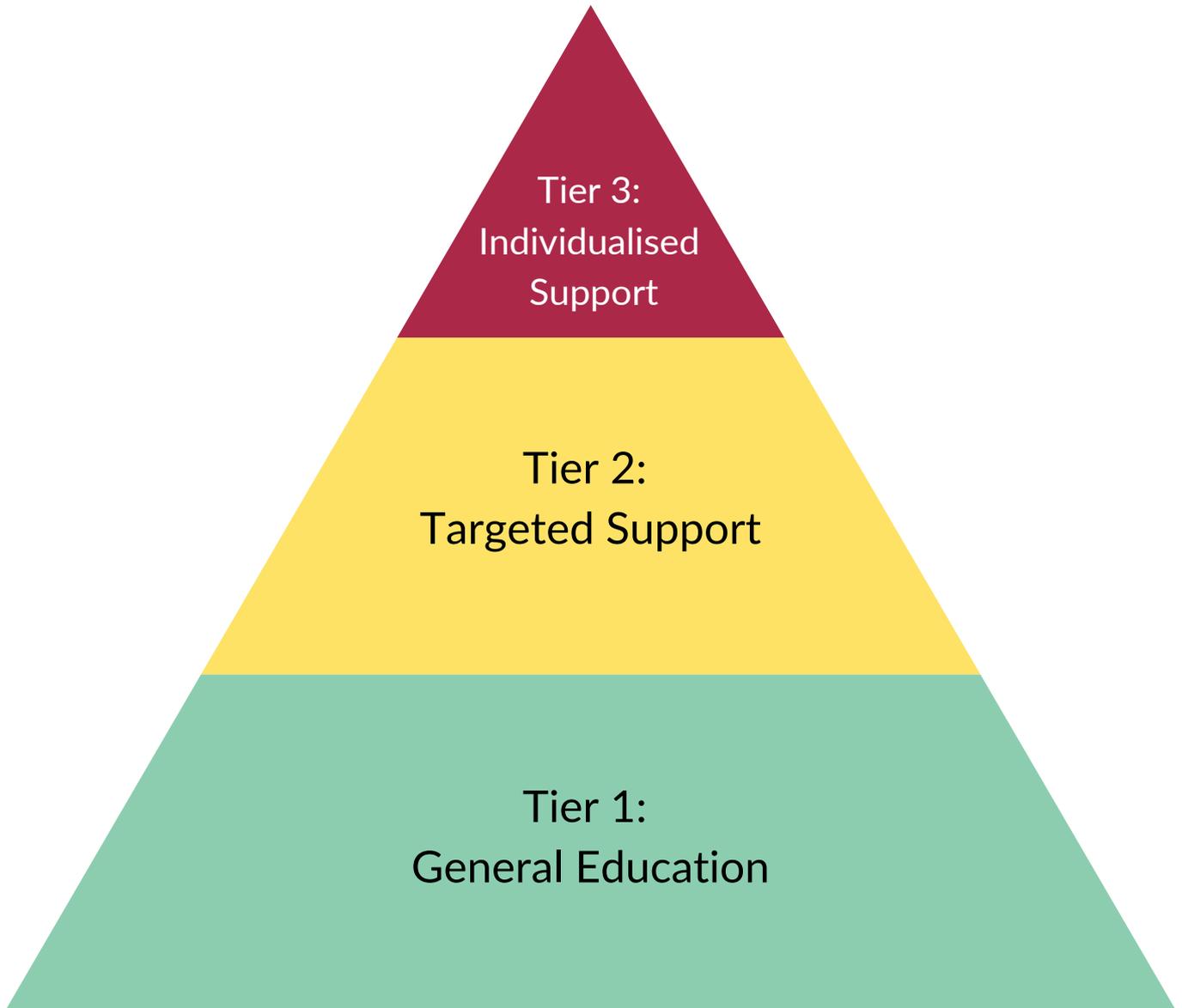
A guide to
**HELPING YOUR CHILD
WEAR A MASK**

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:

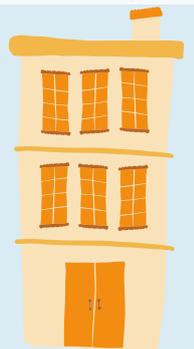
- "I like how you put your mask on!" and/or
- "I like how you are wearing your mask!"

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



Stay at home

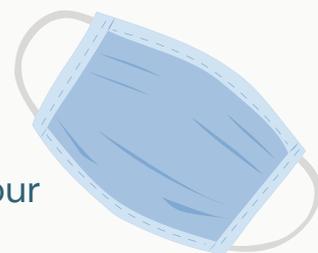
If possible, minimise going outdoors to reduce the need for wearing a mask.



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

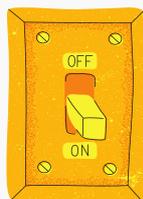
Model wearing a mask at home.

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

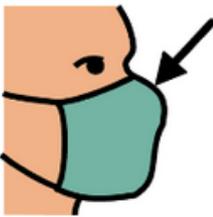


Wait for your child to comply or enforce consequence.

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
 Wear Mask	 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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