

MASK TOLERATION

SECTION 1

Goal

The goal of this process is to tolerate wearing a mask (covering for mouth and nose).

Setting

This should initially be taught in a person’s home. This can be moved to the community for generalization and maintenance.

Materials

- Mask (minimum of one for learner and one for the teacher or the peer model running the program)
- Timer
- Activities to complete while wearing mask – up to 20 minutes of engagement, preferred items (reinforcers)
- Social narratives and/or videos

Social Narratives/Video Resources

Pre-teaching or instructions can help with the behavior we want to see. Neither pre-teaching nor instructions alone are typically enough, though, to improve or change behavior on their own. As part of a comprehensive plan, social narratives (for example YouTube videos) can be helpful. Social Narratives typically explain the “why” and describe the appropriate behavioral responses.

You can choose which one you think might be best for the individual.

Resource	Note
YouTube Social Narrative Author: Mike McGovern	Video. Includes free .pdf. Good resources for children. This Social narrative talks about not being able to go to school, so if your learner is attending school you will have to explain this to them.
YouTube Social Narrative Author: Diverse Learning Hub	Social Narrative video
Social Narrative Author: Autism Services, Education, Resources, and Training Collaborative (ASERT)	Written narrative. Great resource for adult learners, multiple languages available.

<p>Social Narrative Author: Autism Research Institute</p>	<p>Written narrative. Great resource for adult and children learners.</p>
<p>Social Narrative Author: Meg Stone-Heaberlin, PsyD & Celia Schloemer, MA Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics & UCCEDD Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center</p>	<p>Written narrative. Great resource for adult and children learners.</p>
<p>Video Model Author: Cincy LEND</p>	<p>Video model that includes instructions, modeling and rehearsal with shaping. Can be easily paired with social narratives. Video represents a real person.</p>
<p>Teaching video Author: Alpine Learning</p>	<p>Video. Good for staff and parents. Includes directions and videos.</p>
<p>Teaching Resource Author: NJ Autism</p>	<p>Teaching resources. Good for staff and parents. Includes directions and videos.</p>
<p>Wearing a Mask at School Author: Carol Ploch</p>	<p>Social narrative video for school aged children.</p>
<p>Brainpop COVID 19 General Information Author: BrainPop</p>	<p>Video. Social narrative for youth about COVID 19 - General Information which includes information about how to stop the spread.</p>

Resource on How to Conduct Preference Assessments

A preference assessment is an evaluation of the learners preferences that can be used to help determine potential reinforcers and type of mask to use.

Just asking a learner what they want or prefer is not a reliable way to identify reinforcers. Preference assessments can help. Some very easy-to-follow tutorials on how to conduct a preference assessment can be found here: The videos that are found in this link are easy to follow.

<https://ebip.vkcsites.org/preference-assessments/>

Preference assessments are an important step and can help determine what a learner will work for. If you can, try not to skip over this step. This will help you create a hierarchy of the learner's preferred reinforcers.

SECTION 2

Teaching

Session 1: Baseline (Start here)

1. Set up the environment, ensure you have all related materials
2. Introduce the topic of wearing a mask.
 - a. Provide rationales: why this is important (for example, wearing a mask will keep you and others safe)
3. Show the learner one of the social narratives/videos.
4. Tell the learner you are going to see how long they can tolerate wearing the mask during the next couple activities.
5. If the learner has not shown any indication of avoiding people when seeing a learner wearing a mask, you can put your mask on to model the skill.
 - a. You could use a picture of someone wearing a mask to help.
 - b. You can use favorite stuffed animals, etc
6. Ask the learner to put on the mask.
 - a. If they need help, help them: If teaching the learner to put on the mask is needed, you can develop a plan for that.
7. ***If the learner engages in any avoidance behaviors (e.g., pulls away, makes a noise, says “no”) do not force them to put on the mask.***
8. Set the timer for 20 minutes.
9. Begin engaging in the planned activities.
10. Record the duration the learner wore the mask, up to 20 minutes.
11. If the learner did not tolerate the mask for any duration: start intervention on Phase 1*.

*Phases are listed below in Section 5

SECTION 3

Session 2: Intervention

1. Set up the environment following steps 1-3 from baseline (session one)
2. Introduce the topic of wearing a mask.
 - a. Provide rationales why this is important. Remind them they are working to keep themselves and others safe.
3. Start intervention phase one to two phases below the phase achieved in baseline.
 - a. For a learner with zero tolerance start at Session 1.
 - b. For learners with some tolerance, ask the learner to put on the mask.
4. Have the learner choose from activities to engage in while wearing the mask (unless you are starting with a phase that the individual will not be wearing the mask)
5. Tell the learner what they will be earning for wearing the masks the targeted duration.
6. If the learner has not shown any indication of avoiding people when seeing a person wearing a mask, you can put your mask on to model the skill.
7. Ask the learner to put on the mask. ***If the learner engages in any avoidance behaviors (e.g., pulls away, makes a noise, says “no”) do not force them to put on the mask.***

8. Start the timer for the targeted amount of time and begin engaging in the activities. (Unless starting with a previous phase)
9. Throughout the time the mask is on, and while engaging in the activities, praise the learner.
10. If the learner touches the mask or attempts to take the mask off, use verbal prompting (cues and encouragement) to remind him/her to keep hands away from his or her face (for example. "try to keep the mask on a little longer please". Remind them they are working towards the reinforcer for making it to the targeted time (e.g., "remember if you can keep your mask on for 2 more minutes you will earn extra YouTube time").
11. If the learner does not make it until the targeted time, tell them that's okay – you can try again later.
12. If the learner makes it to the targeted time (or completes the targeted phase e.g. tolerates the mask being held 30cm away), praise them for keeping themselves safe and provide them with the chosen reinforcer.
13. If the learner does not make it through the targeted phase* twice in a row, move back one step. Success is very important!

*Phases are listed below in Section 5

SECTION 4

Some Variations to Consider

Peer modeling: If you use peer modeling it is always good to have a peer with high social status to the learner as the model. There is a large literature on peer modeling being an effective tool. It is important to provide the models with reinforcers for participating.

Practicing in a group: Practicing in a group with persons who have similar duration goals might be a good option, particularly when using games for engagement. Even if the people don't have similar duration goals you might let each of them know what their individual goals are and have group praise from each person in the group for the individual meeting the goal. Individuals who already have reached the 20-minute goal also might be good models during a group activity.

If learners are having trouble, consider if the mask type has been evaluated for learner comfort/sensory concerns e.g., is there an aversion to fabric type, is it too tight on their ears?

Another variation that might work is using group-based reinforcement

Dependent Group-Based Reinforcement: One learner wins the reinforcement for all.

For example, when going to the grocery with all your children, before you get there pick out one person (at random) and say if "person who was chosen" wears his/her mask the whole time everyone will get to pick a treat.

Interdependent Group-Based Reinforcement: All learners need to complete the task to gain the reinforcement. For example, if everyone keeps their masks on while we are in the store, then everyone will get ice cream when we leave

Independent Group-Based Learning: anyone in the learner group who completes the task gets the reinforcement. For example, whoever keeps their mask on the whole time will get a cookie.

For instruction there are many strategies to use to teach the skill of mask wearing. These include, but are not limited to backward, forward, and whole task chaining to teach the skill of mask wearing.

Chaining is used to teach a new skill. The learner learns a sequence of behavior, and when chained together it is the completed skill. This can be used to teach learners to put masks on and off. This would be breaking the skill down into steps. e.g. 1st hold the mask, next grip the loop with two fingers, next pull the loop over one ear... and so on.

SECTION 5

Mask Duration Phases

For the baseline, record the total duration (up to 20 minutes) the learner was able to wear the mask. After identifying the baseline, start sessions as described at the phase before the phase in which the learner's baseline met.

For example, if the learner wore the mask for 3 minutes, begin sessions at 2 minutes. If the learner wore the mask for 10 minutes, begin at least at 7 ½, or you could start at 5 minutes if you think that would be best for the learner.

Phases

The learner will move into the next phase after 2 trials of meeting time criteria without engaging in any attempts to remove the mask or any challenging behavior. The learner will move back one step if they have 2 trials of not meeting the criteria. Clinicians can use clinical judgment about moving a learner up or down the phases. For example, if the learner appears to do very well at 10 minutes and you want to try 15 next, you can do that – but be careful not to push the learner too fast. Pushing the learner too fast will decrease their success and may reduce the likelihood they will want to continue.

Phase	Criteria
1	Face mask within 30 cm (12 in) for 5 seconds
2	Face mask within 15 cm (6 in) for 5 seconds
3	Touches the loops of the face mask
4	Holds mask by loops
5	Attaches one loop to the ear
6	Fits the second ear loop
7	Pulls and pushes top edge of the mask for a tight nose bridge adjustment
8	Wears mask for 3 seconds
9	5 seconds
10	15 second
11	30 seconds
12	1 minute
13	2 minutes

14	3 minutes
15	4 minutes
16	5 minutes
17	7 ½ minutes
18	10 minutes
19	13 minutes
20	15 minutes
21	17 ½ minutes
22	20 minutes

SECTION 6

Data Collection

Name: _____

Date: _____

Baseline Duration: _____

Start Duration: _____

1. Record the phase the learner is in (see phases 1-22)
2. Start the timer when the session starts and record the total duration they were able to keep the mask on during the session.
3. Record any attempts to touch the face or to take off the mask (see prompting procedure should this occur).
4. Record any occurrences of challenging behavior while wearing the mask.

Date	Phase	Total Duration the Mask was Kept On	Touch Face/Attempt to Take off Mask (frequency)	Challenging Behavior (frequency)



Disclaimer: This is not intended to be, and cannot replace the benefits of individualized treatment. These are general recommendations. If you continue to have any concerns, please consult directly with a licensed and/or board-certified behavior analyst.

The educational resources and supplemental materials above were designed and developed by the Golisano Institute for Developmental Disability Nursing, in collaboration with faculty from the Wegmans School of Nursing at St. John Fisher College and Daemen College. The training materials were created with input from stakeholders, including service providers, families and individuals with IDD, and staff from congregate care settings.

This publication is supported by funds from the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council. The opinions, results, findings, and/or interpretation of data contained therein are the responsibility of the Contractor and do not necessarily represent the opinions, interpretation, or policy of the New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council.