

Welcome!

Resources for Families Adjusting to Child Care



We are so happy to welcome you to our center, whether you are returning or new.

We know families have many questions about this transition beyond the health & safety protocols. Questions like:

- ▶ How will my child adjust in a new classroom, with new teachers?
- ▶ How can I help transition to a new routine?
- ▶ What if they feel sad or anxious, or have separation anxiety?
- ▶ How will they respond to teachers in masks?

We are here to help you through this process. First, we can assure you that the children and teachers in the centers that have been open are thriving.

Our focus is on the health, safety, and well-being of each child and family and that includes emotional well-being. Our classrooms include daily activities such as mindfulness, recognizing emotions, empathy development, and friendship building.

Second, we have created numerous resources for families to prepare for and support their children's social-emotional needs. Many of these are shared on the following pages; and links to additional resources are included at the end of these materials.

And, finally, we want to introduce you to Olly Pop. She is our very own health & safety superhero. She does a big job in a lighthearted way. Through engaging, child-friendly activities, she helps children learn about their own wellness and integrate this learning as part of their physical development. She also builds important cognitive skills as she helps children develop perspective-taking skills, problem-solve, and put learning into action.

Here's to a bright new day,



Rachel Robertson

VP, Education and Development



Tips for Transitioning Back to Child Care

Change is difficult for all of us. With little control and capacity to understand their circumstances, children can sometimes struggle. We know consistent routines help children to feel safe and secure, especially during times of change. Here are some practical tips and strategies for you to develop routines that will help your child transition back to child care.

Tips for adjusting to new routine:

- ▶ Changes to sleep schedules have the potential to affect our emotions and behavior. If possible, spend 3-5 days prior to your child's first day on the new schedule. Set your alarms with enough time to wake your child up and begin your new routine. Get up and get ready just like you will when you return.
- ▶ For children preschool age or older, create a visual daily schedule to help establish a consistent routine. The visual schedule is also a great way to reinforce self-help skills and responsibility. Take pictures of your child brushing their teeth, getting dressed, eating breakfast, and putting on their shoes. Hang it in a central location in your home at the child's eye level. You can also have them mark each activity as they complete them.
- ▶ Don't neglect your morning routine. What is it that you, as the adult, need to do to get your day started? Adjust the time you wake up in the morning to help you start your day feeling calm and unrushed.
- ▶ Discuss with your children, and role play, what they can expect to happen during the school day. Here are a few steps that you may want to include:
 - Current enhanced protocols at our centers require temperature checks at a designated drop off location. Show your child an infrared forehead thermometer, and practice taking your child's temperature and have your child take your temperature.
 - We recommend creating a special drop off ritual with your child. As part of the ritual, assure your child you will return to pick them up. This consistent ritual will help your child feel safe. Arrive at the center early to allow for more time so you do not have to rush through your ritual. Be sure to follow through on your pick-up routine; avoid promises you can't keep.
 - Do not reinforce any potential nervousness by expressing worry at drop-off. A confident and loving good-bye will help them feel safe and know you believe they will be ok.
 - Center staff are required to wear face masks while in the center, which could possibly feel intimidating for young children. While most children have adjusted readily, it's good to be prepared. Help them understand why teachers are wearing masks; practice covering your face to show your child it doesn't change you.
 - Use play and stories to process change and questions. We have created a set of paper dolls and a story about masks featuring our Health & Safety Superhero Olly Pop and a set of social stories to help discuss real-life topics in a child-friendly way.
<https://www.brighthorizons.com/life-at-home> We also have the digital book "[What Happened to MY World?](#)" written by experts supporting children through stress and trauma.



Tips for Supporting Big Emotions and Challenging Behaviors

Children do not have the sophisticated vocabulary or self-concept to express themselves effectively, so they most typically communicate how they are feeling through their behavior. We all do this sometimes, even as adults! As you transition to a new routine, children may express some big emotions through challenging behaviors. Some of the behaviors you may experience include: tantrums or resistance, nervousness or feeling anxious, or regression in skills. These behaviors are common during times of change or stress and they are all very normal. Children who display these behaviors are feeling overwhelmed, frustrated, scared, or out of control. Here are some tips to help children navigate their feelings.

- ▶ Validate your child and help them identify their feelings. When children feel big emotions they do not have the capacity to use their words to express how they are feeling. Take a moment to acknowledge their feelings and then offer strategies to manage those feelings. (It looks like you are frustrated, let's take some deep breaths to calm down.)
- ▶ Children pick up on our emotions and strategies. Consider your own emotions and how you can model healthy coping strategies. Telling your child "I am feeling stressed right now, I need to take some deep breaths," teaches them everyone has difficult feelings, as well as demonstrates a positive way to work through them.
- ▶ Read stories and discuss how the characters are feeling. Ask your child open ended questions about the story: "How do you think they feel? Why do you think they feel that way? What can they do to feel better?"
- ▶ Practice and role-play. If they are worried about being apart, play "work" or "office" at home. Use dolls, stuffed animals, and even set up a play office (or other type of workspace) area.
- ▶ Offer comfort. When children are sharing their feelings through their behavior it is important to remain patient and offer comfort. Reassure your child that you will get through this together. Keep in mind that the overwhelming emotion is happening to them, not you; you are a witness more than a recipient. If you get angry, you are likely to increase their stress. When you are comforting and calm you can reduce their stress and work through it together.



How to Help a Child Who Is Struggling With Big Emotions

"When little people are overwhelmed by big emotions, it's our job to share our calm, not join the chaos." –L.R. KNOTT

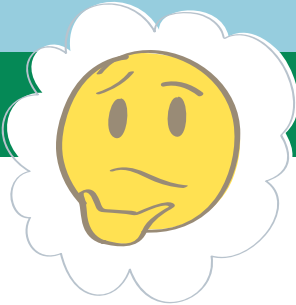
- ✓ Stay calm. Big emotions can seem scary to little people. They need your demeanor to say, "I will keep you safe. Everything will be okay."
- ✓ Quiet yourself. Do not try to talk your child out of her feelings. The quieter you become, the more quickly the child will regain calm.
- ✓ Ask your child for permission before offering gentle physical support, such as a hand on the shoulder.
- ✓ Look your child in the eyes. Say, "I see how sad and frustrated you are. I want to help you."
- ✓ When your child is calm and ready — and only then — help her discuss her feelings and begin to find solutions.
- ✓ Try a few solutions. Are they successful? If not, try something else.
- ✓ Observe your child to understand what her behavior is communicating. Does she understand your expectations? Is she capable of complying? Is she feeling distress or sensory overload?
- ✓ Teach emotional literacy. Talk about your feelings and things you do to feel better. Encourage your child to talk about her feelings.
- ✓ Be flexible. If your child is happily engaged in building a block structure, for example, could you extend the play longer or allow your child to leave his block structure up to return to later?

Understanding and Responding to Children's Communication

Many of us grew up with the notion that children's behavior is something to be managed and controlled, often through a system of rewards and punishments. When children are "good," they are given a reward or treat; when they're "bad," they face time out, loss of privileges, or a similar consequence.

These ideas might help us "manage" behavior in the short-term, but they can have long-term negative effects. What if, instead, we looked at behavior from a different perspective — as a means of communication? How would that change our interactions with children?

Behavior is children's primary way of communicating, especially during the early years when they are still developing language. When we understand this, we can respond to children empathetically, in ways that build relationships and trust. Psychologists, educators, and behavioral specialists have discovered that behavior is most often communicating one (or more) of the following:



I do not understand your expectation.

When children are confused, it's hard for them to listen or follow directions. They might seem uncooperative, when, in fact, they are likely feeling frustrated or anxious. Most children want to please adults. They want their days to run smoothly and they want to feel peace, just as we do.

How to help:

- ▶ Create a predictable, yet flexible, routine.
- ▶ Make a written schedule, perhaps using pictures for younger children. Refer to it throughout the day.
- ▶ Make clear, realistic family rules and expectations, preferably with the children's help. It could be as simple as, "We care for ourselves, each other, and our homes." Refer back to these rules frequently.
- ▶ Get on children's level. Look them in the eye, state your expectation clearly, and explain why you have the expectation, e.g., "When you throw your toys, you could hurt your sister or our house. I need you to play with the toys carefully."
- ▶ Tell children what you want them to do, rather than what you don't want them to do. "Please walk" is clearer and more positive than "Don't run."



I cannot comply with your expectation.

We wouldn't expect a child with no musical experience to sit down at a piano and play a concerto, yet we often expect children to perform socially and emotionally in ways that they simply can't.

How to help:

- ▶ Make sure your expectations are realistic.
- ▶ Recognize that each child develops at his or her own pace.
- ▶ Observe your children with curiosity. Does their behavior indicate that you might be asking too much or that they need instruction?



I am feeling distress or discomfort.

Throughout the day, children have a variety of needs and experiences. Challenging behaviors might be a sign that they're bored, hungry, tired, in need of comfort, or experiencing sensory overload. Young children are still developing self control and awareness. They might be able to comply with an expectation for a little while before running out of steam.

How to help:

- ▶ Recognize when your child is experiencing sensory overload, which often manifests itself in withdrawal, overactivity, aggression, or stimming (repetitive verbalizations or hand gestures). Some children become louder and more physical; others retreat or even put their hands over their ears.
- ▶ Offer quiet spaces or read a book together.
- ▶ Ensure children get plenty of physical activity, especially time outdoors if possible.
- ▶ Bring natural objects inside.
- ▶ Use gentle touch and a gentle voice to offer comfort.

Meet Olly Pop!

Hi, my name is Olly Pop and I am the **Bright Horizons®** Health and Safety Superhero.

I help children learn how to take care of their growing bodies and brains. From nutrition, to my own Olly Pop bandages to playground safety tips, we have fun as we work on our wellness.

One thing we focus on every day is illness prevention. Through handwashing, proper sneezing techniques, and cleaning our classroom, we can prevent lots of germs from spreading.

With cold and flu going around, and the new coronavirus, we thought you'd like to learn a bit about how we stay healthy and maybe use our ideas at home!



Special Edition

Olly Pop, our very own health and safety superhero, is ready to help children do all they can do to stay healthy at home. In this special edition, Olly Pop focuses on teaching children about germs and illness prevention while also supporting families as they implement healthy routines and practices at home.



Learning About Germs and Illness

With the recent news of spreading illnesses like flu and coronavirus, it is more important than ever to continue to implement our strong health and safety practices with every child, every day. As children are learning to take care of themselves, we know that families too can benefit from continued focus on the importance of washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes, etc. Olly Pop is here to help ensure a focus on health and safety not only as part of our classroom curriculum, but to support families in these efforts at home as well. We consider personal wellness a learning opportunity like literacy and math.



These Olly Pop suggestions center on how to prevent the spread of any germs that can make us sick.

The provided experiences and suggestions will help children explore and answer the following questions:

- ▶ What are germs?
- ▶ How do germs move?
- ▶ How can we keep germs from getting us sick?
- ▶ What other ways do our bodies help us stay healthy?

Upon entering our classrooms, please take a moment to wash your own and your child's hands before beginning other activities.

Suggested activities and materials are intended for various age groups and may not be suitable for all children. Please select only those activities that you feel may work best for your children. Do not allow children to ingest materials and clean up thoroughly after activities are completed.

Books to Support Learning:

Germs Make Me Sick by Melvin Berger | *Germs Are Not for Sharing* by Elizabeth Verdick | *Healthy Kids* by Maya Ajmera
Those Mean Nasty Dirty Downright Disgusting...But Invisible Germs by Judith Anne Rice | *Your Skin and Mine* by Paul Showers

Activity One: Germs on the Move!

Materials:

- ▶ Washable, non-toxic finger paint

Explain to your child that germs use our eyes, noses, mouths, and hands to move from person to person. Ask your child to identify these different body parts by pointing to their own bodies. Make it a game to play together in the car, while waiting in lines, etc.

To help your child visualize the movement of germs, coat his or her previously washed hands with a very thin layer of paint. Then encourage your child to interact with you or their siblings in some way – like handing a ball from person to person, or selecting items on a tray. Once finished, have everyone check their hands or surfaces for pretend germs. How have the germs spread?

Remind your child that this is why we do things like washing our hands, coughing into elbows, and using tissues.



Experiences to Weave In At Home

- ▶ Remind your child to wash hands at appropriate times throughout the day, such as arrival in the classroom or at home, before meals, and the other times noted in the green box on page three. Use these opportunities to tell your child how washing our hands helps us get rid of unhealthy germs.
- ▶ Physical activity is important for wellness and with limitations on being in public spaces during this time, it is important you ensure your child has time for full body activity. When possible, take your child outside for few minutes, even if it is a bit chilly. When time outdoors is not an option, get moving inside by encouraging your child to create their own dance or try practicing your yoga moves together.
- ▶ Eating healthy, exercising our bodies, and getting plenty of rest help keep our bodies from getting sick. Point out and encourage these healthy practices to your child when you see them.
- ▶ Make sure hand washing is easy by providing a step stool in the bathroom so your child can reach faucets easily and making sure soap bottles never run empty. Post a step-by-step guide with photos. Download the [How to Wash Your Hands](#) sign that we use in our centers or create your own.
- ▶ Put facial tissues down low in each room so your child can easily reach them to blow their nose or cover a sneeze. Child-safe mirrors can also help your child clean his or her face independently. Download our [Don't Spread Germs](#) poster to show your child how to cover coughs and sneezes.
- ▶ Encourage your child to help clean by providing materials like paper towels and spray bottles containing soapy water. Note that children should not help with sanitizing.
- ▶ Encourage your child to help with keeping their belongings clean by creating a washing station in a sink for baby dolls and other toys. Fun and clean at the same time!
- ▶ Children learn through imaginary play. Help them set up a doctor's office or a school for dolls or stuffed animals so they can role-play caring for others and staying healthy.

Activity Two: Soap Saves the Day (Recommended for ages 3+)

Materials:

- ▶ Flaked spices such as dill, parsley, and cilantro
- ▶ Dish soap
- ▶ Plates or bowls
- ▶ Water
- ▶ Q-tip

Fill bowl or plate with water and have your child sprinkle flaked spices on the surface of their water. Tell your child to imagine the flakes are like the germs on their hands. They can then dip a Q-tip into the soap and touch the surface of their water. What happened to our pretend germs? Why do you think the germs moved away? Explain that soap does the same thing to real germs when we wash our hands.



Children should wash hands...

- ▶ Upon arrival to a new location or coming in from outdoors.
- ▶ Before and after handling food for a cooking activity or serving/eating food during meals.
- ▶ Before and after playing in sensory tables or going swimming.
- ▶ Before and after taking medication.
- ▶ After toileting or diapering.
- ▶ After wiping nose or coughing.
- ▶ After cleaning or handling trash.
- ▶ After handling animals or their equipment.

Activity Three: Steps of Hand Washing

Materials:

- ▶ Two hand washing posters, one cut into four pieces (optional)

While washing hands at home, ask your child if they can tell you what they do to wash their hands at school. Talk about each step and ask, "What comes first? Then what? And what is next? What is the last step?" Select a song together to sing each time they wash their hands to make sure they are scrubbing long enough.

Download our [How to Wash Your Hands](#) poster. Print one for display and a second to cut up into four strips. Mix up the pieces and challenge your child to put the pieces back together in the right order.

Activity Four: Caught In the Act

Materials:

- ▶ Piece of paper and writing utensil (optional)

Discuss with your child all the things that we can do to keep ourselves healthy. You can write them down on a piece of paper together if desired. These things might include washing hands, covering coughs and sneezes going to the doctor, and many more. You can then encourage your child to take ownership of their own wellness by playing a game together in which your child(ren) "tell" on someone when they catch them doing something healthy.

Support your child in creating a plan to help everyone in the family remember to cover coughs and wash hands.

Special Edition

Olly Pop, our very own health and safety superhero, is ready to help children, teachers, and families stay healthy. In this special edition, Olly Pop focuses on the use of facemasks in preventing illness. Masks have quickly become part of our culture and are more prevalent than ever before. Masks are also used by many of the helpers of the world – doctors, nurses, firefighters, superheroes, and now teachers.



Using Facemasks

With recent changes to guidance from the Center for Disease Control (CDC), our staff in open centers, and many individuals in public spaces as well, will begin to wear facemasks. This is a precaution, which in the past has been largely unfamiliar to children. As children are exposed to this new sight, it is likely that they will have questions about masks and may even become frightened.

To help children with their questions or concerns, we have created this resource from Olly Pop to help teachers and families navigate this new ground. We encourage families to introduce masks as a precaution people are taking to stay healthy – especially when they are working. However, emphasize to children that a facemask does not replace healthy practices such as handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, etc. Masks should never be shared or switched between individuals.



Who Wears a Mask?

Materials:

- ▶ Community helpers book or images of workers with or without masks
- ▶ Chart paper
- ▶ Drawing or journaling materials

Discuss with your child what people wear masks for their jobs – firefighters, doctors, dentists, construction workers, and even superheroes like Olly Pop! You can make a list together and discuss why these people, and now our teachers, might need masks to do their work. Read a book about community helpers or look at images to see if you can find any more people wearing masks. Share with your child how you're a helper in your job. If you wear a mask a work, take a photo and share it your child so they can see what you look like in a mask. Encourage your child to draw a picture of what kind of helper they would like to be. Ask: *Would you need a mask as a helper? What kind of mask would it be?*

Why do young children, especially infants and toddlers, find masks unsettling?

Distorts facial features. Masks can make familiar people unrecognizable and contributes to stranger anxiety – a familiar person now appears to be a totally new and unknown person.

Obscures ability to read facial expressions. Children are very tuned into our expressions, often without us knowing. They look to our faces for assurance that “Yes, this is safe,” and even for clues about danger, “No, this is not safe.” A mask covers our mouths, which we rely on to give a comforting cue, such as a smile. We will keep smiling, though. Our eyes also give non-verbal cues to children.

Object permanence. Infants are working on developing this concept, which involves a baby’s understanding that when things disappear it does not mean that they are gone forever. Before this understanding, children think that when items (or people) disappear that they are completely gone. A mask covering may exacerbate this by obscuring identity so that a child thinks a caregiver has left.



Remedies to Try

- ▶ Speak to children about what they will see when they go to school and why their teachers are now wearing masks. Explain that it is to help their teachers and their classmates stay healthy, just like washing their hands and covering their coughs.
- ▶ Let your children, especially babies and toddlers, see you in a mask at home. Show a photo of you in a mask at work or create a mask with a bandana to wear for a short period. Don’t wear it for too long though; children need to see your face while they’re at home! Pay attention to your young child’s comfort level.
- ▶ Play peek-a-boo games or hold your baby and look in a mirror together. Keep your tone playful, reassuring, and light.
- ▶ Ask if your center has photos or videos of your child’s teachers that they your child can view at home. Pictures of teachers, both in and out of their masks, or a video where they can hear their teacher’s voice can both be helpful.
- ▶ Provide pictures to your child’s teachers of you and other family members, even pets! This will help children see familiar faces more often.



Special Materials

To help your child become more accustomed to the sight of masks, we encourage you to print and use the following materials to help children explore, discuss, and play with the concept of masks.

These materials are conversation starters, story characters, and props for imaginative play. Start here and see where the conversations take you.

Included in this packet are **facemask activity pages** and **Oly Pop paper dolls**.

Peek-A-Boo

Materials:

- ▶ Block, ball, or other similar material
- ▶ Blanket or large piece of fabric

Support the development of object permanence for your infant by playing simple games like peek-a-boo.

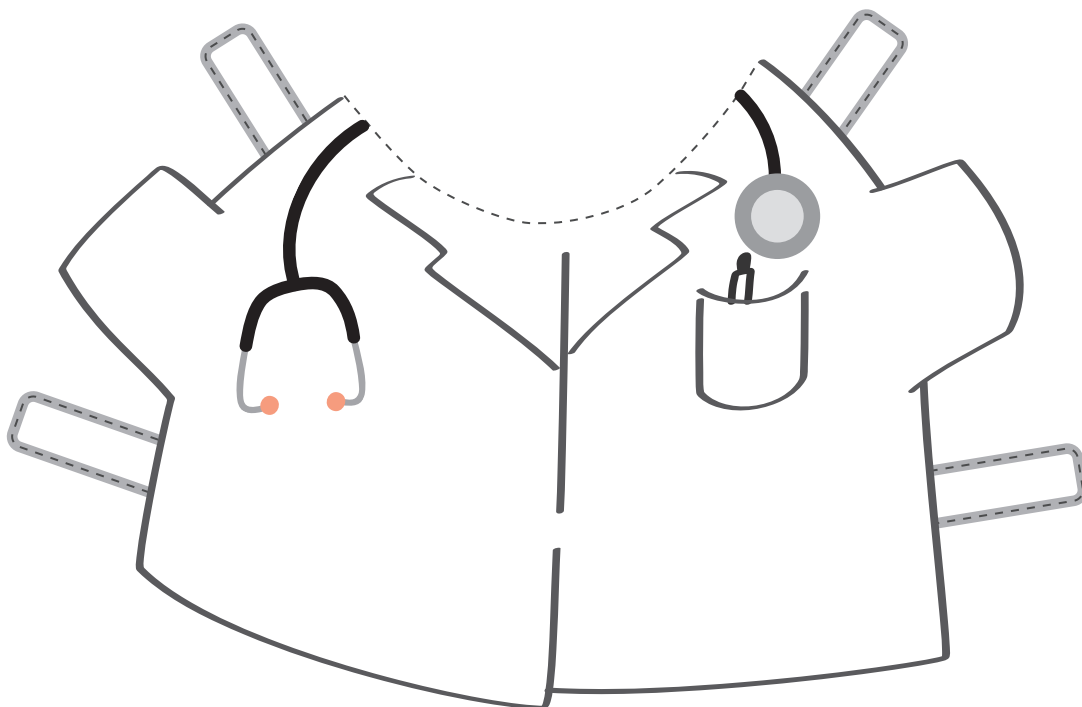
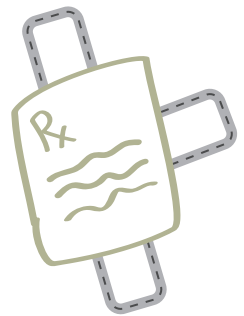
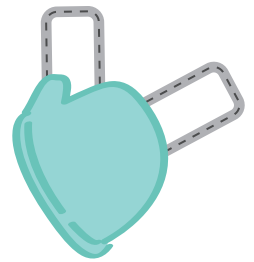
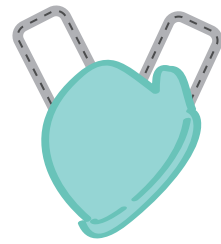
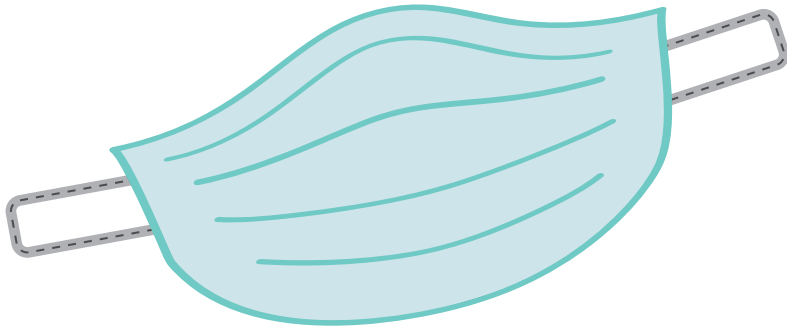
Show the block to the child and then cover with a blanket. Look at the infant and say with hands raised and in a positive tone, "Where did the ball go?" Look down, remove the blanket and repeat with excitement, "Here it is!" Repeat often and with different objects.

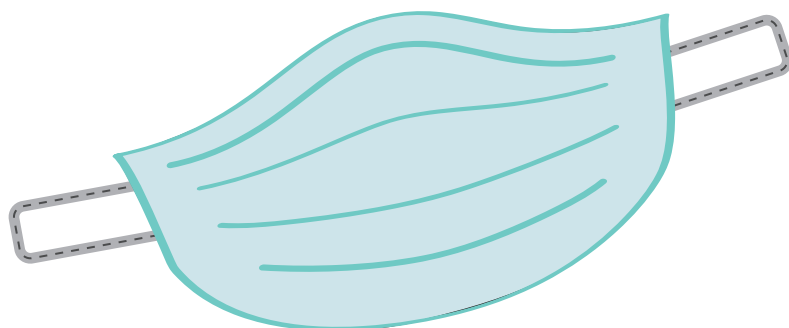
More Ideas for Home

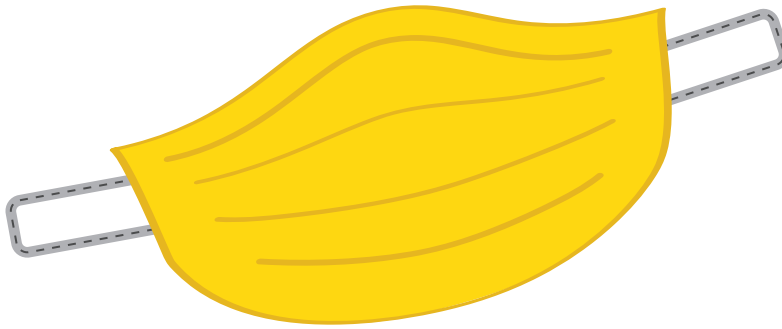
- ▶ Practice social-emotional skills by expressing different emotions when covering them bottom half of your face and challenging children to guess the emotion by looking only at your eyes.
- ▶ Adapt your normal peek-a-boo play with your infant or toddler by covering only your nose and mouth. Let children see your eyes and exaggerate your expressions as you play.
- ▶ Create and decorate masks for your child's dolls and stuffed animals.
- ▶ Review with children other ways that people can stay healthy in addition to masks. Utilize Oly Pop's activities on germs for more ideas, located in our [Learning at Home resources](#).

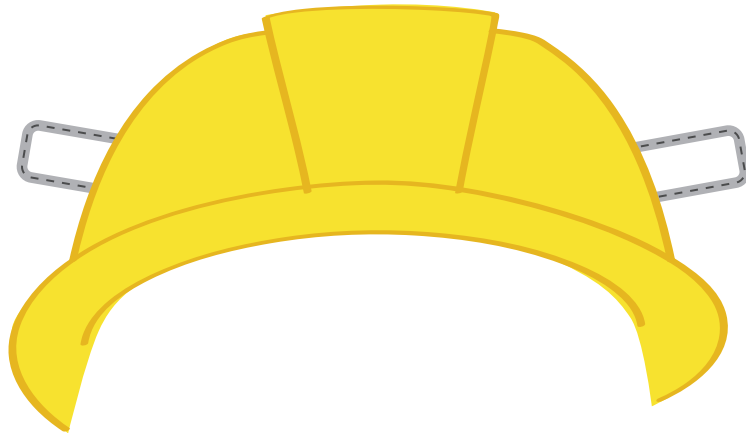
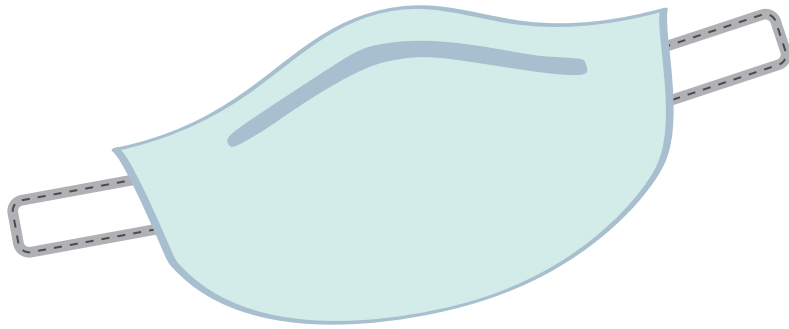












Additional Resources

- ▶ Advice on talking to children about COVID-19.
 - ▶ <https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/talking-to-children-about-covid19>
- ▶ Learn about the four pillars of security, and how they help you maintain emotional reserves.
 - ▶ <https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/strategies-for-parents-caregivers-responders>
- ▶ Get practical advice from our early childhood experts on parenting through uncertainty.
 - ▶ <https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/parenting-through-uncertainty>
- ▶ Help your child manage stress with expert tips and strategies.
 - ▶ <https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/how-to-help-children-relieve-stress>
 - ▶ <https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/coping-with-stress-and-stress-relief-strategies-for-the-family>
- ▶ Mindfulness practices for children and adults.
 - ▶ <https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/mindful-kids-calmer-days>
- ▶ Watch our *World at Home* webinar series and get tips from our educators for learning and living.
 - ▶ <https://worldathome.brighthorizons.com/webinars>