Getting Comfortable Wearing Masks

There are many reasons why people are unable to wear a mask. People with autism and intellectual disabilities may not tolerate face masks well due to sensory sensitivities. Masks might feel uncomfortable or make it more difficult to breathe. It can also cause fear and anxiety, because it hides a part of other people's faces.

There are many ways to make traditional face masks more tolerable.

Give Choices

Incorporate the individual in the decision making process as much as possible. Have them be involved in choices around the type, design, and material the mask is made of as much as possible.

Make Masks from Soft Materials

Although masks are preferred, general face coverings are also acceptable if it is necessary to go out into public, or if support staff are coming into the home. A mask made out of soft cotton, a bandana, or other household items may work better for some individuals.

If individuals aren't able to tolerate anything touching their face, using a face shields may be an alternative option. While face shields do not protect as well as a mask, it still provides a level of protection.

The CDC recommends that homemade face masks can be breathed through, covers the nose and mouth and are washed after each use. It is not recommended for children under two years old.

Practice

Get the person used to the face mask by practice wearing one at home before going in public.

Replace or Change Uncomfortable Parts

Sometimes masks can be altered to be more comfortable. On some masks, elastic ear loops can be replaced with cotton straps. Face masks that have metal across the nose can be replaced with more comfortable material.

Make it Fun

Create a game around wearing a mask outside. You can turn the mask into a costume or play a game of see who can leave it on the longest. Have them practice by putting a mask on a toy, stuff animal or doll. Distracting them with favorite activities may be another way to help them get more comfortable wearing a mask.