



### Teaching Mask Wearing to Children with Autism

With Governor John Bel Edwards reinstating the indoor mask mandate which includes K-12 schools and the approaching start of school, many parents may be faced with questions and challenges regarding mask wearing for their students with autism. A recently published study found that the use of positive reinforcement, shaping, and prompting, among other strategies, were effective in teaching a group of children to wear a mask for 10 minutes without challenging behavior. The “mask wearing” teaching was conducted via telehealth with caregivers implementing the strategies to their children. The children in the study had a history of challenging behavior. The researchers used an “Exposure Hierarchy”: a series of 15 steps or target behaviors, beginning with having a mask nearby and ending with wearing the mask for 10 minutes.

The study also addressed a common concern for caregivers – whether masks decrease oxygen intake. The children in the study wore fingertip pulse oximeters which measured oxygen saturation. The oxygen measures during training indicated masks did not decrease oxygen intake. The participants’ mask wearing also generalized to community settings. The researchers noted several limitations to the study which included not assessing mask wearing for longer than 10 minutes. To read the study, click here:

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.802>

While 10 minutes may not be functional for a trip to the grocery store, the results of the study are encouraging. Successfully getting to 10 minutes is a good starting point. The study is another example of how behavior analytic strategies are effective in helping children with autism adhere to health and safety practices.

However, there are some persons with disabilities that may [not be able to wear a mask safely](#) – and there are many considerations based on individual differences when addressing mask wearing, such as type of mask; over the ear or tie, sensitivity to different fabrics, smells, and others. If your child currently refuses to or has difficulty wearing a mask effectively and you would like your child to wear a mask to reduce his/her risks, contact your BCBA to discuss possible treatment strategies. janice

### Parent and Caregiver FAQ

**Question:** My child isn’t feeling well but I gave him Tylenol and he seems better; can he still attend Touchstone?

**Answer:** Due to the highly transmittable nature of the Delta variant and the recent surge in children testing positive across the state, our current procedure is to require a medical clearance to return to services if a client is exhibiting **any symptoms of illness**. We realize that some of the COVID symptoms also occur in other illnesses like the common cold, allergies, or stomach bugs, but to maintain the safest possible environment for all our clients and staff, any client’s symptoms need to be assessed by a treating physician and given medical clearance before returning to Touchstone. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

### THIS MONTH’S FAMILY MEETINGS

Houma/Thibodaux Group Meetings **in-person and online** Wednesday, August 25 @ 9:30am and Friday August 27 @ 12:00. Both in-person meetings will be held in Thibodaux, 1000 Plantation Rd, Suite C. COVID safety protocols including masks are required.

Lafayette Group Meetings **online** Friday, August 13 @ 9:00am and Saturday, August 21 @ 10:00am.

To schedule 1;1 meetings, please contact Angie at [alanoux@tc-aba.com](mailto:alanoux@tc-aba.com)

### August

#### New Family Orientations

Please join us for **one** of the following orientation sessions:

**Saturday, August 14, 9-11am**

**Sunday, August 28, 1-3pm**

Please contact Angie Lanoux at [alanoux@tc-aba.com](mailto:alanoux@tc-aba.com) or [jhuber@tc-aba.com](mailto:jhuber@tc-aba.com) to register.

Sessions will be held online via ZOOM.

**If you are unable to attend one of the sessions above, please contact Janice – we can schedule a session that works for you!**

To learn more about COVID and risks for persons with developmental disabilities, visit the [CDC’s website](#)