

Clinical Decision Tree for Mask Exemption Requests for School Aged Children

Does the child have a physical or intellectual condition that renders them unable to remove a cloth face mask independently?

- YES – Based on AAP and CDC guidance, this child should not wear a cloth face mask, and a medical exemption *could* be justified. However, consideration should be given to the individual child's risk of in-person school attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The child's medical team may consider advising the parent/guardian to explore virtual learning opportunities with their school district prior to or in lieu of providing a medical exemption.

If NO, does the child have a need for communication assistance which is impeded by wearing a cloth face mask?

- YES – This category of concern should **not** be used to justify a medical exemption. However, the child's medical team should encourage the parent/guardian and the school to explore adaptations in instructional delivery and/or the use of face masks with a clear plastic insert as appropriate to assist the individual child.

If NO, does the child have a condition such as autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, or a mental health disorder that makes it difficult for the child to tolerate the use of a cloth face mask?

- YES – This category of concern should **not** be used to justify a medical exemption. Face masks with a clear plastic insert have been helpful for many children with similar conditions. The medical team should encourage the parent/guardian to work with their child's teacher(s), paraeducators, therapists, and/or other members of their treatment team to explore strategies to assist the child in tolerating the use of a cloth face mask. In some cases, alternative instructional opportunities, including virtual learning, may need to be considered.

If NO, there are no other physiologic conditions (e.g cardiac, pulmonary) that would automatically warrant a medical exemption to the use of a cloth face mask in school.

All health care team members should encourage families, particularly those with younger children, and schools to promote the use of cloth face masks in schools, as well as in other public venues where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Appropriate modeling of the use of masks by adults and older peers, as well as positive reinforcement, may help younger children adapt more easily to consistent mask use.



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