



# Caring for infants and toddlers while wearing face coverings



## Child care staff can build warm, positive relationships with infants and toddlers while following CDC guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19

Among a variety of safety measures, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidance for child care programs](#) is recommending that staff members wear face coverings within the facility when feasible.<sup>1</sup> Young children who are not used to seeing face coverings on adults might need reassurance. Families can work with caregivers to reassure children that the face coverings are to keep everyone healthy and safe.

Young children are drawn to faces, and they read cues from facial expressions. Face coverings will hide some facial expressions, but caregivers can use a combination of verbal and nonverbal strategies to communicate warmth and to build positive relationships with infants and toddlers.

If appropriate for the children at each setting, here are some examples of strategies that caregivers can use when interacting with infants and toddlers, even as adults wear a face covering:

### Communicate that the children are important & Use your body language and positive touch

- Talk with children in a warm, kind, and calm tone
- Talk with children at their eye level
- Use children's names when talking to them
- Comment on children's interests or activities
- Comment positively, encourage, or praise children
- Use encouraging gestures (for example, clapping, lifting arms to say Hooray, keeping hands open and relaxed)
- Respond to children's cues and communication
- Reassure children if they seem concerned—talk about their feelings
- Make eye contact
- Hold and carry children
- Hug children
- Sit close to children or invite them to sit close to you
- Rock or pat children
- Dance with children
- Play with children (for example, singing "Itsy Bitsy Spider")
- Relax your body—children are sensitive to adult's body language

Caregivers build warm relationships with young children through easy-going, harmonious, enjoyable interactions. Genuinely enjoy your interactions with the children and smile anyway! It will come through in your tone and will visibly change your expression around your eyes.



<sup>1</sup> The CDC also warns not to use cloth face coverings on babies and children younger than age 2 because of the danger of suffocation.